

4

Christian Practice

DESCRIBED,

By WAY of

ESSAY

UPON THE

Life of our Saviour



By STEPHEN SKYNNER,
Rector of *Buckland* in *Hertfordshire*, and
late Fellow of *Trinity-College* in *Cambridg.*

IMPRIMATUR,

Novemb. 17.
1692.

C. Alston.

L O N D O N:

Printed for *Daniel Brown*, at the *Black Swan* and
Bible without *Temple-Bar*. MDCXCIII.



T H E

PREFACE.

IT is a good Observation,
That nothing has made
more **ATHEISTS** in
the World, than Superstition.
For though Immorality has
certainly too great a share in
this, yet may *that* be reckoned
in one respect not altogether
so dangerous to Religion, as
the other : Immorality being
so contrary to Nature's Di-
ctates, that all who are not
extremely blinded by Vicious
Habits, are apt to see into the

The Preface.

Deformities of it ; and so it serves but as a Foil to set off the Beauty of Religion ; like those *Heresies* which the Apostle says, *must come , that they who are approved may be made manifest.* Whereas Superstition defaces Religion it self , as much as in it lies ; representing it in such horrid and ridiculous shapes, that *Standers-by* are rather apt to think it a meer Invention of men, than that a Wise and Gracious God should be the Author of such Extravagancies. And the Design of this Treatise therefore is, to remove those Prejudices which Superstition has raised in mens minds, by setting a true Copy of Religion before their eyes. This

The Preface.

This I thought could no ways better be done, than by following Christ himself, that great Master, who was the wisdom of his Father, and the express image of his person ; a main part of whose business it was, to restore Religion to its Native Purity, by presenting the Original Pattern of it to us, in his own Doctrine and Example : And to his Life therefore I have confined my self, without referring to any other places almost of Scripture. Not but that I pay a like Deference to every other part of God's Word ; but I supposed, that whatever I found in our Saviour's Life or Doctrine, was sufficiently perfect of it self ;

The Preface.

and I was unwilling to swell the Piece to a greater bulk than was proper in this way of writing, by bringing in every Text that might seem pertinent to my purpose: For which reason also it is not to be expected that many particular Objections should be formally answered here; Tho besides the general ones which I have spoke largely to, I think I have touched upon most of the others that are any thing material in our Saviour's Life. And I know of none in any other part of Scripture, but what may easily enough be reconciled with the Doctrines here delivered.

The Preface.

I expect not that some persons should much approve of what I have done ; and I think I have little reason to be concerned at it, considering what sort of people I suppose them chiefly to be. Our Saviour himself Preached Three years to the World, we know, and his very Adversaries were forced to confess, That *never man spake as he spake* ; yet neither could the Powers of his Divine Eloquence, nor his Miracles, make any considerable impressions upon the *Pharisees* hearts. And it is little to be wondred at therefore, if human Labours prove altogether fruitless upon such persons. But there are many o-

The Preface.

thers, I presume, to whom this Work may be of good use, as well for driving out some Melancholly Fears and Scruples, whereby well-meaning people are apt to be discouraged in the Practice of Religion; as for silencing those unjust Cavils, of its laying slavish and *unmanly* Impositions upon men, which profane persons are wont to bring against it.

Nor do I apprehend the least danger of having this Piece censured by any wise unprejudiced person, as giving Countenance to Irreligion, whatever weak or brain-sick people may think of it: For I know of nothing I have
men.

The Preface.

mentioned in it, but what I have good ground for from our Saviour's Doctrine and Example: And I am willing to be reckoned among the Advocates for Profaneness, if any thing that Christ said or did, tended that way. I confess I have endeavoured what I was able, to imitate the skilful Musician here, in not straining the Duties of Religion to too high a pitch: For tho they make the greatest noise when they are most raised, and so please the Vulgar best; yet the Sweetness and Harmony that is proper to them, is lost by this to every judicious Ear. Tho neither have I been less cautious of
slack-

The Preface.

Slackning the strings of Duty too much. And I am confident men will find as little Encouragement here for looseness of Manners, as for an over-rigid Severity.

If some think it necessary to aim at greater Perfection in many Duties than is here required, (I mean *that* which such call *Perfection*) a God's Name let them do it. Their Zeal may be useful in some respects, tho it wants not several Inconveniencies: And the time may come one day, when God will say to them, as he does by the Prophet, *Who required these things at thy hands?* But if the generality of the world be not able to

run

The Preface.

run so fast in the Course of Religion as these men do, there is no need sure of discouraging them from trying to walk: Especially, when Christ has given us such grounds to believe, That a sober diligence in keeping God's Commands, will carry a man as soon to Heaven, as the most Furious Drivings of men of more Zeal than Understanding. Nor do I think therefore, that such deserve less of Religion, who recommend it to men of Sense in Rational ways, as a thing easie and natural to them, through the Assistance of God's Grace, than others, who value themselves so much upon moving
the

The Preface.

the Affections of common people by undue heightning of things, and make as if there were no Religion but what is next to Impossibilities.

I was loth to interrupt my Method by any long Digression, and therefore reserved the Discourse concerning the *Pharisees* Hypocrisy, for an Appendix; which I think I need make no Apology for adding, as being sufficiently pertinent to my main Design. For by seeing here what it is our Saviour so often condemns the *Pharisees* for, we may the better understand our own Duty. And indeed, our Saviour had so much to do with the *Pharisees* in all his Discourses,

The Preface.

Discourses, that a man can scarce apprehend the Force and Tendency of many of his Precepts, without being rightly informed in the Nature and Qualities of that sort of people, of which Hypocrisy made so great a part. However, if better Judgments disapprove the Notion I have gone upon, I hope there is no harm done. It is no Article of Faith, believe the Point which way you will. And if it be any ways of dangerous Consequence to Religion, I am sure it is much more so in the common Notion, than in the way that I have explain'd it.

The

THE

OF THE

AND

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

The CONTENTS.

I *Introductory Considerations touching our Saviour's Life and Doctrine in General,* Sect. 1, 2, 3.

Our Saviour's Life and Doctrine in Ceremonial Respects: And here,
Sect. 4. *Of Ceremonies more generally.*
Sect. 5. *Of Reverence in outward Worship.*

Sect. 6. *Of the Sabbath, or Lord's Day.*

Sect. 7. *Of Fasting*

Sect. 8. *Of other acts of Mortification.*

Our Saviour's Life and Doctrine in respect of Piety towards God. And here,
Sect. 9. *Of Faith.*

Sect. 10, 11. *Of the Love of God.*

Sect. 12. *Of Prayer.*

Sect. 13. *Of appropriating due portions of time to God's Service.*

Sect. 14. *Of Repentance.*

Our Saviour's Life and Doctrine in respect of Duties relating to our selves: And here,

Sect. 15. *Of regulating our Passions aright.* Sect.

Sect. 16. Of Temperance.

Sect. 17. Of Chastity.

Sect. 18, 19. Of moderating our Desires towards earthly things.

Sect. 20. Of Pride or Vain-glory.

Our Saviour's Life and Doctrine in respect of Duties relating to our Neighbour : And here,

Sect. 21. Of these Duties in general.

Sect. 22. Of Faithfulness in Dealing.

Sect. 23, 24. Of Mercy or Forgiveness of Injuries and Debts.

Sect. 25. Of Charity.

Sect. 26. Of not being angry without just cause.

Sect. 27. Of not judging.

An Objection answered concerning the Primitive Christians Practice,

Sect. 28, 29, 30, 31.

Sect. 32. Another Objection answered.

Sect. 33. A Third Objection answered.

Sect. 34. The Conclusion.

An Appendix concerning the Hypocrisy of the Pharisees.

Christian

Christian Practice

Described by Way of

ESSAY

UPON THE

LIFE of our SAVIOUR.



When I consider the Life of our Saviour, I am no less charm'd with the Sweetness and Simplicity of his Character, than the admirable Piety of it. And it is no small Evidence to *me* of the Truth of what he declared himself to be, to find so much of true Holiness in every thing he said or did, mingled with so little Ostentation of Sanctity. Impostors are wont to raise Credit

B

to

to themselves by different Methods. These will take a Form of Godliness upon them, which shall outdo the Original it self many times; but which, like most Counterfeits, is found out by nothing more, than that it goes beyond Nature; it has too much of Varnish and Affectation in it to be sincere. The shew of Religion is much more to these, than the Substance: And so it is not so much those Duties that are most Excellent in themselves, or that God requires most, but those that are most Popular and Plausible in the Eye of the World, that such chiefly mind. Justice and Charity are undoubtedly Vertues of high Esteem in God's sight; and I know of none that our Saviour presses more earnestly. But what a poor noise do these make among the Vulgar, compared with long Prayers, and Mortifications, and high Flights of Zeal, and Scrupulousness about indifferent Matters?

It

It is these last chiefly that denominate Men *Precious* in common Peoples thoughts: And here therefore the Hypocrite places his sole Diligence. No matter how gross his Failings may be in other points. The splendor of these shall dazle peoples Eyes so, as scarce to let them behold their other Defects. And the very *Name* therefore of a Person thus qualified, we find sufficient many times to sanctify the most Unrighteous action.

2. Our Saviour had certainly great Reason to conform his Life and Doctrine to this way of Practice, had it been Convenient in it self. For this was a sort of Religion more especially in Vogue in his Time. The Pharisees, every one knows, what Zealous Professors they were of it. Never was greater Perfection in Holiness than these men might justly Boast of, if mortified, Looks and Behaviour were

Mat. II.
19.

the *great things* required of us by God. The Sun it self might seem spotted, in these respects, compared with their Purity. Whence we find them taking great Offence at our Saviour for his Freedom in Converse, as favouring much of Looseness and Unsanctifiedness, they thought. And no question therefore, as this prejudiced them very much against hearkning to what he taught, so had he but humoured them a little in their Affected Preciseness, wherein they laid the *main stress* of Religion, it would no less have recommended his Person and Doctrines to them. By which means he would have gained the Common people also of Course, these being wholly at the others Beck. The Pharisees were not blinder Guides to *these*, than *these* were blind Followers and Admirers of the Pharisees. But however advantageous it might have proved to Religion, at that time, to humour the Pharisees
in

in *this*, yet was not our Saviour to be wrought upon, even by that *weightiest* Consideration, to do it, so much as by his Example. Our Saviour in all likelihood considered here, that he was no *Private* Person. His Life was to be a Pattern for all Ages to imitate. And it was by no means fit therefore, for the sake of one Perverse Generation, to lay such an unnecessary Burden upon the Consciences of the whole World, as his Example must have proved, had he complied with the Pharisees in any of their Formal ways of Sanctity.

3. And we find nothing of this therefore in our Saviour's Life; nothing of the Sourness of a Pharisaical Leaven in all his Character. His Conversation is every where easy and natural; as far distant from a Puritanical Niceness, as from the Severity of the Cloister. It is holy and blameless in every part; and yet

so accommodated to our Humane
 Estate, that we have no more rea-
 son to complain of want of due
Liberty in it, than of *Perfection*.
 And would some Persons consider it
 aright, there can nothing more *E-*
ffectual be imagined, for removing
 their Prejudices against Religion.
 Those whom the Starchtness of a
 Pharisaical Carriage does justly
 Nauseate, and who perhaps find
 as little Desire, as Ability in them-
 selves, to imitate such a Behaviour,
 would they but look into their Sa-
 viour's Example, would find every
 thing in it so contrary to *this*, as
 must soon make Religion the sub-
 ject, not of their Scorn, but their
 Envy. For there is nothing of the
Saint there, but what compleats
the Man; and what is fully as ne-
 cessary to make us happy, as rati-
 onal Creatures. A man may be
 Religious, according to this, with-
 out intrenching upon the Offices of
 Civility, or denying himself any
 reason-

reasonable Comfort ; without doing any thing beneath the Honour of a Wife or a Great Person. And whatever shew of Holiness some may make, by pretending to more than this, it is at best no other than to go beyond *the Rule*. I speak not this however in relation to our Saviour's extraordinary Mission, but with respect only to the *Common Duties* of Religion. As our Saviour was a Prophet sent from God, and as he was the Great Mediator besides, there are several Acts recorded of him, peculiar to those Offices, which are quite out of the ordinary Road of Life : such was his Preaching in the Deserts, and in the Highways, and his Miracles. The former of which it is no less absurd to think our selves bound to imitate, now Christ has appointed a Regular Ministry in his Church, than it is impossible to practise the latter of them. But for the ordinary Duties of Piety and Vertue, our Saviour's

Example is every where *obligatory* to us. And this is so excellent in it self, that every Wise man would chuse to follow it, though God had laid no Obligation upon him. To consider it in the most remarkable Circumstances of it.

4. Look upon our Saviour's Life in Ceremonial respects, and you will find nothing of needless Scrupulousness or Superstition there. He is for preserving *Order* and *Decency* in God's Church as much as any; though not for encouraging every vain Custom or Rite, which some would impose under the Name of Religion. When the *Canons* of the Church he lived under required it, he *conforms* without *Dispute* in indifferent matters. The Feast of Tabernacles may well seem as *beggerly* an *Element*, as any amongst those the Apostle calls *such*; and no question it was designed by God, as a fitter Entertainment for the

the

the gross Plebeian Humours of his *Servants* the *Jews*, than for his *Son*. Yet did not Christ disdain to appear at *that*, no more than he did at the Joh. 7. 10. Feast of Dedication, which was a John 10. Feast purely of Humane Institution^{22.} It was Argument enough to him for observing *that*, that it was ordained by the Church of which he was a Member; and he was not so squeamish here, as to question the Authority of his Church in constituting so innocent a Right; though it might seem an Encroachment upon God's Prerogative under the *Jewish* Theocracy, and though it was adding weight still to that burden which the *Jews* before were ill able to bear.

And what he thus practised himself, he is very exprels in commanding his Disciples to imitate him in. *The Scribes and Pharisees*, says he, Mat. 23: sit in *Moses's* seat; all therefore what^{2, 3.} ever they bid you observe, that observe and do. There could nothing be said

said more *full* than this, for establishing the Church's Rights in matters of Ceremony ; that in every thing of this nature, not plainly sinful, (for thus far the Command must of necessity be restrained, and to restrain it further is to destroy the Force of it), our Saviour's Will is, The Governours of the Church ought to be obeyed. For sure the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* at this time, were blind and corrupt enough to be excluded this Privilege, if ever it were convenient the Governors of the Church should be so. Not that our Saviour warrants any Church by this, in constituting foolish or burthensome Rites to no purpose ; for Tyranny is hateful to God in *all* Governments ; and more especially to be sure in such, where the Souls of men are concerned : And our Saviour therefore often *protests* against the *Pharisees* arbitrary Usurpations, in clogging God's Service with vain and needless

less Ceremonies. But in regard Tyranny was ever reckoned better than no Government at all, therefore does our Saviour command his Disciples to be subject to the Governors of the Church in all *Indifferent* matters, rather than Schism and Disorder should happen in his Church, by people's obeying no farther than just what they please. Though here he distinguishes betwixt the Publick Sanctions of the Church, ratified by just Authority, and the Opinions of private Doctors, embraced only by particular Sects. Of which last sort we must reckon those *Traditions of the Elders*, so frequently mentioned by Christ, to be, if we suppose him consistent with himself (with Reverence be it spoken). For *these* he neither observed himself, nor does he advise his Disciples to pay any regard to them, as being wholly unobligatory in themselves, and for the most part very vain and super-

perstitious: Particularly that about washing of hands before meat; a Custom abused to that height of Superstition among the *Pharisees*, that one of their wise Doctors teaches us, To eat with unwashen hands is all one as to lye with a Whore. This therefore, and the like Ceremonies, our Saviour neglects to comply with himself; and he scorns the Objection of the *Pharisees*, in urging the *Tradition of the Elders* against his Disciples, for following his Example in it.

Mat. 15. 2.

5. The greatest Act of Zeal in our Saviour's Life, was spent upon *whipping the Buyers and Sellers* out of the Temple. Nor is it to be wondred at, to see his Indignation rais'd at this rate, upon such an occasion; Natural Religion teaching us, That the Temples of God ought not to be turned into Markets and Exchanges. If any except at the manner of our Saviour's reforming
this

John 2. 15.

this Abuse, let them consider the liberty that Prophetick Persons of old were warranted in by God among the *Jews*, as well as *that* which the Zealots in our Saviour's time were permitted ordinarily by the Magistrates to take upon themselves. Let them consider likewise, that Christ's Commission was above all others that God ever gave to men. He acted *as a Son* in God's House, when *Moses himself was but as a Servant*. Though, not to examine farther into *his* Authority to do this, who had *all Power given him* upon Earth, no question but a Divine Spirit was at the bottom of this Act. And the design of it is evidently no other, than to shew, That God's Honour and the Interests of Religion are not a little concerned in outward Reverence and Respect. For what else could have put the meek and gentle Spirit of Christ into such a Ferment? It is not to be thought this was done in favour of the

the

Mat. 21.
12.

the *Jewish* Temple or Ceremonies alone : For Christ repeated this Act twice, and the last time, the very Week of his Passion. But sure he would never have been so extraordinary zealous in this matter, at such a time, were it only to support the Credit of the Ceremonial Law a few days, which was now just *expiring* with his Death. Some indeed, that reckon nothing too great or glorious for themselves, count nothing *mean* enough for God. But our Saviour was not of this humour ; he could behold *the goodly*

Luk. 21.5.

stones of the Temple, and the gifts wherewith it was adorned, without crying out with Judas, Why was this waste made ? And he could

Luke 19.
41.

weep in prospect of the Ruins of so stately an Edifice, when others would have shouted for joy, that proud *Babylon* was falling. Nor did Christ pay greater respect to God this way in his Temple *made with hands*, than in the Temple of his

his *own Body* ; for though the greatness of his Character (being the Eternal Son of God) might justly have entituled him to greater freedom with his Father ; yet for our example, when he prayed, *he kneeled down*, it is said : Certainly a most ^{41.} unanswerable Reproof to that rude familiarity which many use with God in their Devotions. For what shall we say here? Are we more the *Sons of God* than Christ, that we should think it seemly for us to *sit down* before our Heavenly Father, when he *kneelt*? Or are we wiser than he, to think such outward Reverence of no regard in God's esteem, when even in a *Garden* upon the *bare ground*, Christ made a Conscience of paying it to him?

6. We find the *Pharisees* often at our Saviour about the Sabbath. And some may think it strange, that he who exprest so great Zeal for the *Sanctuary* of God, should not show

show greater concern than he did, for the Honour of his *Sabbaths*. But the case betwixt these was very different : For the *Jews*, who at this time so profanely neglected the Temple, were no less superstitiously nice in keeping the Sabbath ; and tho a *Whip* were fittest to scourge their *Profaneness*, a *Bridle* was most proper to restrain their *Superstition*. Wherefore we may observe him holding the Reins *in* here upon every occasion : He is far from encouraging any in a *loose regard* towards this day ; for he considers it as a day dedicated to God's Service ; and

Mark 6. 2. we find him therefore *Preaching* continually upon it in the *Jewish Synagogues* ; to shew that one principal Duty of the *Day* is to attend the Publick Worship of God ; and all the *liberty* he pleads directly for on this day , is only for works of Necessity and Mercy. It is in respect of *these* alone he tells us, That *the Sabbath was made for man, and that*

Mark 2.
27, 28.

that man is lord also of the Sabbath. Nor does he give the least countenance for spending this Day upon Recreation or Secular Business. As sure it is very hard, since God has given us *six* days in the week for the benefit of our Bodies, if the *seventh* shall not be allowed by us to his Glory, and the good of our Souls. Though neither is Christ for tying men up upon this Day, to that strictness which was enjoined by *Moses* as a Clog and Punishment to the *Jews*. He himself was a *Jew*, and as a *Jew* therefore no question he observed this Day in all respects answerable to the *intent* of *Moses*, though not to the *Pharisees* superstitious Glosses upon it: But the *Curse of the Law* which he was *made under*, he desired not to bring upon any of us: And lest his Example therefore should be brought into president, there is no mention made of any *Legal* Observances, in resting from Culinary Affairs, or

C

the

the like, which he tied himself or his Disciples up to on this Day. Rather, the whole drift of his Discourses about this Day, being more to *take off from*, than advance any scrupulous Rest upon it, is a plain Argument of his Design to set up that more *Rational Sabbath*, which the Primitive Christians afterwards observed upon the Lord's Day; when the Sabbath was reckoned, not so much a Day of *Rest*, as a Day of *Good Works*. And instead of sitting still upon it, as the *Pharisees* did, with frozen hearts, and sullen dejected looks, Christians thought nothing so proper (next to God's Worship), as to express their Joy upon it, in making comfortable Provisions for themselves, and for the Poor. We know what *hard words* the Father gave such persons, who chose to Fast upon this Day.

7. Fasting, I think, may well be brought under the *Head* of Ceremonial Duties: And this is certainly an excellent Ordinance in it self; there being no means more proper for resisting the Devil's Assaults, by making us *meek* and *poor in spirit*, fit for the Influences of God's Spirit to work upon. And our Saviour therefore is so far from discountenancing this, that he says there are *some Devils not to be cast out without it*. And he not only prepared himself therefore by it, in order to that grand Conflict he had with the Devil; but he recommends the use of it to his Disciples, at the same time that he cautions them against the *Pharisees* way of Fasting: Indeed he is against the *Pharisees* Fasts, not only as they had an Hypocritical Air of Pride and Vainglory in them, but as they were reckoned by them a Meritorious Act. For never were higher Asserters of the Doctrine of *Merit* by Good Works,

Mat. 17.

21.

Mat. 4. 2.

Mark 6.

16, 17.

than among these *Pharisees*. Whence it was, that to enhance the value of this Duty before God, their Fasts were both carried on with greater Strictness, and were much more frequent than other peoples. Neither of which is much commended by Christ: As to the frequency of their Fasts, our Saviour used his Disciples so little to this, as to make the *Pharisees* think they Fasted not at all. It may seem he was not for making this Duty too common, but for using it only as occasion required. When such Duties are practised of course, they are apt to lose their virtue soon, like Physick to which mens bodies are accustomed. It is the applying them upon great and special occasions chiefly, that makes them have due *Operation* upon mens minds. And though our Saviour therefore tells us, That his Disciples should practise this Duty oftner *when he was gone*; this implies not, that it should always be so, but

Mark 2.
18.

Mark 2.
20.

but only whilst the days of Mourning (as it were) for the *Bridegroom's Departure*, did in an extraordinary manner require it : And much less does our Saviour commend the *Pharisees* rigid Observance of this Duty; pale looks, and drooping heads, are things perhaps that *man* may admire people for, but God delights not in. Even in this most Mortifying Act of Religion, Christ is for *anointing the head*, and *washing the face*; for behaving our selves with modest expressions of Chearfulness before the World. 18
Mat. 6. 17.

8. This Principle of *Merit* which the *Pharisees* so espoused, put them not only upon Fasting at this rate, but upon Whipping themselves also, and using the like acts of Austerity, as good Authors report; which is the practice of the *Romanists* at this day : And this was a *mighty* work of Supererogation among them.

them. But our Saviour gives not the least Encouragement to this, either by his Precept or Example. As Whipping is reckoned a part of *Penance* by the *Romish* Church, we are not so unreasonable to expect to find our Saviour *exercising* his Body after this manner, for sins he never committed; tho as it was reckoned a work of superabundant *Merit*, as well as of *Satisfaction*, by the *Pharisees*, it may seem as proper for him, as any body else: But then certainly it is very strange, among so many Penitents as came to him for cure of their Sins, that he should never prescribe this *Method* of letting themselves blood, did he believe it of any avail to that end. It's true, he gives a fair Character of the *Publican's smiting upon his breast*, when he made Confession of his sins to God; But what then? That was an Act significant of *True Contrition*, and was no less natural for persons in great Trouble of Mind, than Whip-

Luke 18.

13.

Whipping is foolish and unnatural. Nor is *John* the Baptist's course of life, which the Papists insist so much upon, any just ground for this, or the like Austerities: For (besides that there is nothing there of this *Whipping* Practice), *John* the Baptist had an extraordinary Call from God to do what he did: He was to come in the *Spirit of Elias*, as a Forerunner of Christ, and so was to imitate that Prophet in a rough, hardy way of Life: And this, we may suppose, to represent to us, as in an Emblem, the different Temper betwixt the Law and Gospel: For *John* the Baptist was the last Prophet of the old Law, in whom God would shew us the Severity of those Precepts which he thought fit to hold the *Jews* under; but which he is pleased now to hold his Church no longer to, for the sake of his Son: Whose way of Life therefore was a perfect *Reverse* to that of *John* the Baptist,

And indeed, such Austerities as these, when men take them upon themselves of their own heads, or when they pretend to impose them upon others, are no other than such Observances as our Saviour points at, when he tells the *Pharisees*, That *in vain they worshipped God, teaching for Doctrines the commandments of men.* The *Pharisees* pretended no ground for them in *their* Law, no more than the Papist can well do in *ours*. And though in Charity therefore we condemn them not for such extravagant *Will-Worship* as this, yet we rather pity than commend them. Such was our Saviour's Life and Doctrine in respect of Ceremonies.

9. Consider our Saviour's Life in respect of Piety towards God, and you will find as little of *Enthusiasm* in it in that, as of *Scrupulousness* or *Superstition* in the other respect.

spect. Faith is the great foundation of Piety. And this is a Duty of an extraordinary nature in one respect, as the Gift of Prophecy, and the power of working Miracles depend upon it. Though in this respect our *Saviour's* Faith was not *Enthusiastick*. For our *Saviour* really shewed the just pretences he made to an extraordinary Faith, by the *mighty works* he did; whereas the Faith of Enthusiasts produces nothing above the *power of Nature*. And neither was our *Saviour's* Faith attended with those violent Perturbations of mind and body, which Enthusiasts are ever possessed with in their pretensions to Revelation and Prophecy. But as Faith is an ordinary Duty of Religion, it is only a firm belief in, and reliance upon the Promises and Declarations of God, whether with respect to Spiritual or Temporal concerns. As to both which, there is nothing our *Saviour* recommends, but what every

very

very wise and sober man both may, and ought to subscribe to. As to Spiritual concerns, the great Article of our Faith is, to believe that God will *reward* such in another life, who *diligently seek him* in this. And what is there in *that* more, than what the most Barbarous Nations have ever consented in, and which there is nothing more dishonourable to our Natures than to deny? If we are bound also to believe, that the Gospel of Christ proposes the safest and best way of *seeking* God, and so of obtaining a future Reward, I suppose no one that calls himself a Christian will think much of having that added to his *Creed*. Nay, and considering the excellency of that Testimony with which the Gospel is confirmed, if Christians are also required to give their consents to some *Truths* therein revealed, which are above the power of *Humane reason* to comprehend; I think no man, in com-

mon Modesty, can object against this: especially whilst he considers withal the vast disproportion betwixt God and us, together with the weakness of Humane faculties in discerning the Nature Causes even of the most common Accidents here below. There are many things in Nature which we *believe*, though we *see them not*, and though they seem somewhat *contrary* to reason; such is the Earths hanging upon nothing, in the midst of the Air, which we have nothing but the power of an Almighty Architect to fly to for the solution of; but sure it is hard to deny that Faith to *Supernatural*, which we give to *Natural* things. As to Temporal concerns, the sum of our Faith is, That God governs the world with the greatest wisdom and goodness, and so that we ought to rely upon his Providence in the use of lawful means, without anxious fears or troubles. And this is no other than
a na-

a natural Principle, and such as is the great foundation of Happiness in this life. He that believes this heartily, is at Peace with himself in every condition; and the *same Peace* which he brings to himself by it, he suffers the rest of the World to enjoy. Whilst some whining Hypocrites, that talk of nothing *more* than Faith, and practise nothing *less* than what Faith directs, are a continual Plague to themselves and all about them, by needless Complaints and Jealousies. It is a noble Strain of Philosophy that our Saviour expresses himself in, about that undisturbed Content which every one ought to quiet his Soul with, in consideration of God's Providence. *Take no thought for the morrow, but let the morrow take thought for it self; sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.*

Mat. 6. 34.

10. Love of God is the most genuine Effect of true Faith. And the
Love

Love of the *Eternal begotten Son* towards *his Father*, we may well think was *so* great, as to leave *in-
finitely* behind it every thing that is called by *that* Name. Yet do we see little of those Transports of Passion in his Love, which Mystical people talk so much of; and which make the Love of God a Duty no less difficult to be understood than practised. He tells us indeed in one place, That *he and the father were* John 10.
one; and in another, That *the fa-
ther was in him, and he in the father.* John 14.
11.
But such places relate to his *Hypo-
statistical* Union with the Divine Nature, which it is Blasphemy for any to pretend to besides himself. And there is little ground therefore from hence, for those extravagant expressions which contemplative *Rhapsodists* love to speak in, of being united by Love to the Divine Essence, and being *Transfused* into God. When Christ speaks of Love as a Duty incumbent on us, we have no
such

John 14.
21.

such Expressions as these. And to love God then is no more, than to *keep his Commandments* out of a Principle of *Duty* and *Choice*, as we count him a *Being* highly worthy to be served by us before all things. And there is no need of straining our faculties to such Romantick heights, as the people I have been speaking of talk of, to do this. For though our Saviour tells us, that we

Mark 12.
30.

must love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and all our souls, and all our minds, and all our strength; What is this more, than to express our Love towards him, in obeying his Commands with readiness and sincerity? As we usually mean in common Speech, when we cry, we will do such a thing with *all our hearts*, that we are disposed with willingness and affection to do it. There are no Notions of Divine Love more sublime, than those we meet with in *Plato* and his Heathen followers; from whom it is plain our

Mysti-

Mystical Divinity took its Rise. But such ought to have *strong* Heads, that soar aloft, as they did. And if Vulgar Souls are bound to aim at such Contemplative Perfection as these talk of, we shall want more *Bed'ams* than Churches. Nor can I think *that* to be a Perfection in Religion, which none but Philosophers, and men that lead the lives of such (I mean Sedentary Contemplative lives) are capable of arriving at. As if God had not the same regard to a *poor Labouring man*, that studies diligently to serve him in a plain well meaning way, as to the most *Speculative* person in the world. It is the *meek* and *humble* Soul that Christ delights most in; and it were well therefore if these high Notions did not puff mens minds up with too much Spiritual Pride, to make them deserve the Character of such persons.

11. I never met any people in my life that were more unwilling to leave the world, than those who make a *Longing* desire of enjoying God in Heaven to be a *necessary* part of our Love towards him. You shall find these cling as close to the earth as other people, when Death gives them warning to prepare themselves for parting with it; they are as peevish as others, and inquisitive after Remedies, and desirous to be flattered into good hopes of doing well again, which are certainly no signs of any *extraordinary* Forwardness to go to their *long Homes*. Nor can I see Ground of Condemning men of this, as long as we find our Saviour himself *Sympathizing* with Humane Nature in it. Were there any necessity of *such* an instance to prove our Love towards God to be sincere, we might justly have expected from Christ, a desire of leaving this world, and being united to God upon *any* Terms. For
 what

what were the Sufferings he was to endure, compared with the *joy that was set before him*? But our Saviour desired not to make himself an Example of such *Heights* of Love; which (tho visible in some Prophets, and Divinely Inspired persons, from their intimate Converse with God, as well as in some Saints and Martyrs immediately before their deaths, for Confirmation of *theirs* and other peoples Faith; yet) in the ordinary Dispen-sations of Grace are little less than impracticable. And therefore when the *Cup* of his Passion was presented to him, he shrinks Mat. 26.
39. back from it, in a natural abhorrence; and he chuses rather to receive the irrevocable Sentence with an act of bare Submission to God's Will, (*Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt*) than any Rapturous Expressions of Longing after God: The same which is observable in the *whole* History of his Death.

D

But

But if Christ behaved himself at this rate, whose Faith was so *strong*, and consequently his Love of God so *ardent*, What more can be expected from us *weak* Creatures? Indeed the *glass we see through here*, is so *dark*, as to Heavenly Things, compared with that which presents Earthly Objects to us, that if our Bodily Welfare affect us more than the Hopes of Future Happiness, it may in a great measure be excused by the different Force of the Objects striking upon our Faculties: And therefore it required all the Arguments and Exhortations that the Wisdom of God (as it were) could invent, to raise our Thoughts to a tolerable relish and apprehension of those glorious things revealed in his Word. Wherefore, in short, though the Enjoyment of God in Heaven be certainly the *Great End* of a Christian's hopes, and that which all his actions ought in some measure to be directed to-
wards;

wards; yet to propose this to our selves with *Passion* and *Eagerness of Desire*, or so as utterly to despise the Comforts of this World, may well be thought a little above the proportion of the imperfect estate of a Christian in this life; being reserved by God as a main part of that Happiness which we must expect in the Blessed Vision above.

12. Prayer is an excellent expression of Piety towards God: And there is nothing recommends this Duty so effectually to him, as Fervour of Devotion in it: But then our Saviour shews us, that this Fervour consists not (as some would have it thought) in wild Gestures, or loud and passionate Exclamations. When he himself prayed in the Garden, he *prayed earnestly*, it is said; and we may well think his heart was never fuller, than in that bitter Agony, nor consequently his Affections more

Luke 22.

44.

Mat. 26.

39, 42, 44.

raised than at that time: And yet what is the result of this, but that he *fell meekly upon his knees three times*, and uttered these few gentle words, *Father, if it be thy will, let this cup pass from me*: And if we consider *that Prayer* of his which he prescribed to his Disciples, both as a *Pattern* to Pray by, and a *Form* to be constantly used by them, it may seem contrived on purpose to answer the Enthusiasts pretences about this Duty: For (not to insist upon its being a Form of Prayer) in the first place it was such a Form as was very short, consisting of but Six Petitions, and those comprehended in few Words: He was not for the way of some people, who measure their Prayers more by the *Hour-glass* than their *Wants*. He exposes it as an *Heathenish Custom* to use *vain Repetitions*, and impertinent Length in Prayer. Besides this, it is calm and meek, suitable to the Temper of its *Author*;

Mat. 6, 7.

thor ; no Heats of Passion in it, no vehement Outcries or Exaggerations ; nothing to raise those wild Spirits in men, which make 'em rave, and foam, and toss about, as if they were possessed. Not that Length of Prayers is blameworthy in it self, nor yet Vehemence of Action or Speech, which in a *sober sense* is commendable in Prayer, upon some occasions ; but to shew, That Fervour of Devotion is no ways inconsistent with *cool blood*, or *fewness of words* ; and that God is as often at least in the *still small voice*, as in the *earthquake* or *fire*.

13. It is a great part of Piety to bestow due portions of time upon God's Service : And we find our Saviour therefore often in the Temple and the Synagogues of the *Jews*, worshipping God in Publick, as well as frequently retiring *with his Disciples*, and *by himself*, to his private Devotions : Though all this

Mark 14.
49.
John 18.
20.
Mark 1.
35.

D 3

while

John 2. 1.
 Luke 12.
 39.

while our Saviour was no such En-
 chite, as to think the greatest part
 of his Life ought to be spent in
 Prayer ; but he bestows considera-
 ble portions of his time upon his
 own Refreshment, and upon the
 offices of Humanity and Friend-
 ship ; besides, what must be suppo-
 sed to take up the main bulk of his
 Life, his Working (as it is thought)
 till Thirty years of Age, at his Fa-
 ther's Trade : And neither there-
 fore is he for that way of practice
 which prevailed so much in after-
 Ages, of peoples retiring from the
 world, and mewing themselves up
 in Cells and Cloisters, that they
 might have nothing else to do, but
 to Meditate, and Worship God :
 The *Romanists* look upon this as the
 greatest Perfection in Religion :
 And what was begun therefore in
 Primitive Times out of *Necessity*,
 when men were forced to fly into
 Desarts to avoid Persecution, these
 take upon themselves of *Choice* ;
 some

some few, according to the *Original Pattern*, but multitudes in a *fond Imitation*, entring themselves into Monasteries too often as a cloak of Idleness, to serve their Bellies and their Lusts, more than God. It is a Remarkable *Saying* of an Ancient Father to such people; *Thou separatest thy self from the World, that no body may see thee; but whom dost thou benefit by this? Hadst thou been what thou art, thinkest thou, if every one had done as thou dost?* And our Saviour plainly leads the way to the *Father* in this; he is not for such Perfection in Religion as destroys one main end of it, which is to make men helpful and beneficial to one another; but he divides the Law into *Two great Commandments*, Mat. 22:
38, 39. the Love of God, and of our Neighbour, which he makes alike necessary to be observed, and so is not for having one of these to swallow up the Duties of the other: Tho if one must necessarily be omitted

Mat. 12. 7. at any time, he is even for preferring Works of *Mercy* and Goodness before *Sacrifice*. For his own part, the great business of his Life was, *To go about, doing good*; not to sit Musing continually by himself; by which he brought no less Glory to God, than Benefit to Mankind, Nor does our Saviour prescribe any set Rules, what time must of necessity be employed upon Acts of Devotion, but leaves this to every man's Conscience to proportion the time according to his leisure and opportunities. To be sure, to begin and end the day with God, is the least he requires from us, as being that which Natural Religion teaches to be necessary: And yet, would some men make a Conscience of this, tho they work *six days in the week*, according to God's gracious Allowance, I question not but they serve God as acceptably, in profiting the world by their lawful *Callings*, as the severest *Recluse* in bend.

Acts 10.
38.

bending his knees continually before God.

14. Repentance is a Duty so near a-kin to Piety, that I know no place more proper to speak of it than this. This is a Duty of a very solemn and severe nature, and such as habitual sinners must expect much trouble and contention with themselves about, before they bring it to perfection: Tho certainly such have little reason to complain of any hardships in this Duty, as having brought them upon themselves by their own Fault; and they have much more ground to admire God's Goodness in allowing *any place at all* to Repentance, than to charge his Justice with Severity in making the Terms of our Reconciliation so difficult, were they much more grievous to us, than really they are. For indeed, as the case now stands, there is nothing in this Duty but what *we our selves* should count reasonable,

sonable, were it payable to any of us. To be heartily sorry for a fault; Who is there that admits a gross Offender to Mercy without this? Who likewise that reckons such a one worthy of new favour, without actual signs, as well as promises of amendment? Though here I see no necessity for those *heights* of Sorrow which some insist upon so much, as the only true marks of sincerity in this Duty; and which, by unwary Applications, have run so many into Melancholly, Madness, and Despair: I am sure there is very little ground for it in our Saviour's Discourses about Repentance: His design is rather to *mend*, than to *break* peoples hearts by this Duty; whence we may observe, *Zachens's* Repentance is described by an act of *Restitution* alone; and *St. Matthew's* by *following* Christ, and entertaining him at a Feast presently; and the *Theif's* upon the Cross, by humble Confession of his Guilt, and

Luke 19.
8:

Luke 5.
28, 29.

Luke 23.
41, 42.

and Faith in the Merits of our Saviour; and not one word all the while of any excessive sorrow that our Saviour prescribes, in his Exhortations to these or any other persons. It's true, the Prophets often endeavour to awaken the *Jews* from their Spiritual Security, by calling upon them to *Howl*, and *Cry aloud*, and *Rent their hearts*, with like terms of rousing Rhetorick, agreeable to the Genius of the Old Law, which was delivered at first in *Thunder and Tempest*. But such who study to imitate the Prophets Stile, rather than Christ's, I think, scarce consider aright, *What spirit they are of*: For sure our Saviour had hardened sinners enough to deal with, to provoke him to this Stile, had it been suitable to his Temper: Though still it must be allowed, there is much of the Hyperbole in those Expressions of the Prophets, (no unusual Figure among them). And after all, they them-

themselves confess, That it is not
 so much the *afflicting the soul, as*
 Isa. 58. 5. *turning from wickedness, and doing*
that which is lawful and right, that
 God calls Repentance. Not that
Godly Sorrow is otherwise than com-
 mendable in every degree of it, as
 it is a sure sign of Grace and an ex-
 cellent means of Conversion; it
 being half way towards Amend-
 ment of any Fault, to be thorough-
 ly possessed with trouble and grief
 for it: And happy therefore is he,
 whose heart being tender, and his
 Soul touched with a deep sense of
 his Folly and Ingratitude in offend-
 ing God, can with *David* and
St. Peter, melt into Tears presently
 at the remembrance of his past
 crimes. But that which is lauda-
 ble or useful, is not always necessa-
 ry; and I think there is as little
 reason to suppose it should be so in
 this, as in any other case; for there
 are many Natural circumstances of
 Age, Sex, and Constitution of bo-
 dy,

dy, that cause great difference in peoples Inclinations to Sorrow ; as, the weaker and more tender they are, the more easily they are, generally, wrought upon by this Passion; Childhood and Old Age are more subject to it than Manhood ; Women more than Men ; soft and gentle Natures, more than rough and manlier dispositions : But sure Salvation does not depend upon such Circumstances as these, which people can no ways help : And if some therefore, who upon the most sensible afflictions are not able to shed a Tear, (as there be many of this Temper), shall with *Dry Eyes* confess their sins before God, this certainly shall never be reckoned as a Bar to their Acceptance with him.

This was our Saviour's Life and Doctrine in respect of Piety towards God.

15. Look upon our Saviour's Life in respect of Duties relating to our selves, and it is altogether of *a piece* with what has hitherto been observed : His Conduct here does more especially shew us the free and generous Temper of his Religion ; that the Design of it is not to *en-
slave* ; but to *enoble* the Spirits of men. The regulating our passions aright, is one main Branch of these ; and as to this, our Saviour was undoubtedly the greatest *Master* of his Passions, that ever the world knew ; for what others boasted so much of only in *Words*, he practised in *Deed* ; nor were there any Trials therefore so *severe*, as to alter the Evenness of his Mind. When a *Cato* and a *Brutus*, after all their pretences to Philosophy, fell into the utmost degrees of impatience at last, reviling Providence as weak and unstable, for not *Crowning* them with Success answerable to their Virtue ; our Saviour could behold his greatest

oft Merits rewarded with the foulest
 Ingratitude that the world's Malice
 could invent, and yet *like a lamb be*
led to the slaughter, and not open his
mouth all the while ; than which
 there is certainly no truer evidence
 of *Greatness of Soul*, in such cases
 as this, where to murmur is but to
 reproach Providence, or at best to
 exercise our spleen to no purpose :
 Though neither does our Saviour
 shew himself an example of such
senseless unconcern under any trou-
 ble as is *contrary* to nature. He is
 not for those *Stoical Rants* of look-
 ing upon Sickness, and Death, and
 the like bodily Evils, as *things with-*
out, that belonged nothing to him ;
 but where things were really bur-
 thensome to Nature, he is not asha-
 med to express tokens of humane
 weakness, in grieving at them ;
 when the Day of his Sufferings
 therefore drew nigh, he falls into
 cruel *Agonies* and *Convulsions* at
 the thoughts of those Miseries he

was

Mat. 27.
46, 50.

was to endure; and he gives not up the Ghost afterwards, without twice crying out with a loud voice, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* The extremity of his Torments wringing from him this Complaint; and *that* without any imputation of undutifulness to God; there being a great difference betwixt Expostulating thus with God in humble ways for seeming to forsake us in our troubles, and charging his Providence foolishly for so doing; nor does our Saviour think it any lessening to himself, or injury to God, to exercise his Passions upon much slighter occasions than this; particularly in the case of *Lazarus's* death, where he is said to weep, and groan, and be troubled in mind, whilst he saw the two sisters, *Martha* and *Mary*, lamenting over their dead Brother: He was sensible how great an Affliction the loss of so *Dear* a Brother must be; and therefore instead of Reproving the

Joh. 1. 33.

the *Women* for such natural expressions of love, he disdains not to shew a like tenderness of affection *himself*, in condoling with them. And indeed, in such cases as this, Passions are not only very innocent, but very useful and commendable many times, if restrained within due bounds, being only a more Emphatical way of expressing those inward Sentiments of our Souls by *Actions*, which might well become us otherwise to do *in Words*; and being designed besides as a *Relief* to Nature, to soften those Afflictions by giving them vent, which are apt to swell and rage the more in us, by endeavouring to stifle them: And when we speak therefore of nothing altering the *Evenness* of our Saviour's mind, we speak in a sense answerable to the Constitution of Human Nature; not that outward Accidents wrought no change in his Passions (for then he must have ceased to be a Man),

E

but

but that they caused no such disturbance in him, as was offensive to Religion, or destructive of his own Happiness and Content. In short, he used his Passions as *Servants* only to Nature and Virtue, not as *Tyrants* over Reason and Sense; whereby he prescribed the most proper limits to them.

16. Temperance in Eating and Drinking, is another Duty we owe to our selves; and the world cannot deny it to be a reasonable one, if the design of it were only to preserve our *Bodies* in health: Tho here our Saviour's Example is far from obliging us to a *Rechabite* Strictness, or to weigh our Meat by Grains and Scruples. *He* that made the World, knew better for what end the Creatures were sent, than that they should lye upon the ground and perish: And he had rather therefore undergo the names of *Wine-bibber* and *Glutton*, from the

the *Pharisees*, than abridge Man-kind of a due Liberty about these things. We may well imagine the occasion of those base Reflections being cast upon *Christ*, was the over-preciseness of the *Pharisees* in their Rules of Temperance, who it seems would strain at every *Gnat* they met with in their Glass or Dish, though they could swallow whole *Camels* laden with Oppressing Sins: But our Saviour was not to take his Standard of *Morality* from *their* stingy Measures; and without any thing of Reservedness therefore, we find him frequenting Plentiful Tables, and Friendly Meetings: *The Son of man came eating and drinking*, as he himself testifies. He accepts of a *great Feast* from his Disciple *Levi*, as a Consecration-Entertainment upon his Admission into the Apostleship. And he fears not to make the *Pharisees* Witnesses of his Innocent Freedoms at their *own* Tables, though

Mat. 11.
19.

Luke 5.
29.

Luke 11.
he 37.

Joh. 2. 10.

he knew how apt they were to violate the Laws of Hospitality, in basely Censuring him when he was gone. He appears at the *Marriage-Feast of Cana in Galilee*, and scruples not to work his *first* Miracle for supplying the Guests with Wine, after they had *well drunk*, it is said: Not to encourage any thereby in *Beastly Excess*, but to preserve the Master of the Feast, who was his Friend, from Reproach, and to shew his Approbation of a *moderate* Chearfulness upon such occasions; if any *disordered* themselves afterwards, (as we find not they did) it was their own fault: Christ is no more to be blamed for this, than God Almighty, who provides plentifully for us of all sorts, tho he knows many are like to make a very bad use of his Bounty: Nor can *Any* therefore well desire greater *Liberty* than Christ allows here; if they do, I am confident it is not in a sober fit; for there is nothing
more

more true, than that if Intemperance were imposed upon men as a Duty, it would be reckoned one of the greatest Slaveries in the World.

17. Chastity may be reckoned another Duty relating to our selves : And this is a Virtue of so nice and tender a nature, that the least *impure thought* is apt to sully and deface it : Though we have little reason to complain of the Strictness of Religion, in restraining our *thoughts* about this, if we consider the proneness of our Natures to lust, how apt they are to take fire at the least spark, and to rise into a flame presently, if never so little encouraged. It was necessary such Appetites should be strongly rooted in mens minds, for the propagation of mankind ; since it is scarce to be thought otherwise, that any would undergo the Pain and Trouble of bringing forth Children and

providing for them, were they not led to it by some very *inviting* sense of Pleasure: But then it was as necessary for that end, to prevent *Confused Mixtures*: And man therefore is not more possessed, by the Constitution of his Nature, with Desires towards the Act of Generation, than with Detestation of the Abuse of it; witness those *Sons of Pleasure*, who indeed are well enough content to injure their Neighbours this way; yet reckon nothing so intolerable, as to have the Chastity of their Wives or Daughters defiled, or to be called the *Offspring* of so base an Act. Wherefore to prevent so dangerous and odious a Vice, Christ endeavours to destroy it at the root, if possible, by condemning all unchaste Thoughts and Desires: And to this purpose he tells us, That

but to *look upon a woman, so as to lust after her, is to commit Adultery with her*: It is not to be thought here,

Mat. 5 28.

here, that every first Motion of our Hearts towards Lasciviousness, if timely suppressed, is what our Saviour means by *looking upon a woman*; such imperfect acts as these, being declared by the best Casuists, to be so far from sins *destructive* to Salvation, that they become rather the Parents of Virtue to us, by exercising our Faith and Obedience. And indeed, were such an act enough to constitute the *Adultery of the Eye*, the *Pharisees Practice* (as odd as it was) might seem no less than necessary; some of whom we are told were wont to walk continually with their eyes shut, blundering against every one they met, only to avoid the sight of Women. But in short, it is only the *fixing* our Eyes and Imaginations upon one another with wanton Desires, that our Saviour condemns in this place. And this is so far from being a slavish Imposition upon us, that it serves only to free our minds from

one of the most Tyrannous Masters we can possibly be subject to ; such is the Passion of Lust when once it gets a Head ; a passion no less *vain* than *insolent* , for the most part, as it busies it self, and torments men with longing after those Objects, which it has no hopes or possibility many times of ever enjoying.

Luke 16.
14.

18. The moderating our Affections towards Earthly things , is another Duty owing to our selves, that our Saviour very much insists upon ; and the more, because the *Pharisees* made so light of it ; for the *Pharisees* were *Covetous* , we are told ; and so little sensible were they of any Hurt being in this, that they could *Laugh at Christ*, when he talked to them of the impossibility of *serving God and Mammon* at the same time. But our Saviour saw enough of this sin in the *Pharisees*, to convince him of the pernicious effects of it to Religion, and the
Good

Good of Mankind. And had he not seen it there, he could as easily have foreseen it in his Disciple Judas, to whose Covetous Disposition he knew the Loss of his Precious Blood should be owing: Certainly the greatest Brand of Infamy that can possibly lye upon any one sin! And well therefore might our Saviour caution his Disciples against this sin, with a *Beware of covetousness, for the life of man consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth.* The Heathen Moralists spent much time in exposing this Vice; and the very shame of setting their hearts upon things which had so little of solid Enjoyment in them, and which were so soon to have an end, was reckoned argument sufficient among these, for moderating the Affections of every wise man towards them: But our Saviour does certainly much improve the Argument, when to the *frailty and Unsatisfactoriness* of

Luke 12.
15:

of Earthly things, he adds the consideration of a *Glorious Immortality Above*, as a Subject much more fit to employ a Christian's thoughts and care: And since our *Treasure is in Heaven*, well therefore may he require, that our hearts should chiefly there be fixed; that we should *not lay up for our selves treasures upon earth, but lay up treasures for our selves in heaven, where neither moth nor rust do corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal*. Our Saviour does not hinder us by this, from providing decent and comfortable Maintenance for our selves and Relations; for even he himself is observed to have carried a *Bag* in his Company, though his Power of working Miracles, which of it self was sufficient to feed *Multitudes*, seemed to give little occasion for such a trouble: Nor yet does he require us hereby so to withdraw our Affections from the things of this life, as not to rejoice

or

Mat. 6. 20.

John 13.
29.

or take pleasure in them ; for this is natural, for men to delight in those things which tend to their Ease or Benefit ; and God would never certainly have implanted in us such *strong* Desires as he has, toward Worldly Happiness, did he not allow us to gratifie them in some considerable measures : But indeed all that our Saviour requires of us about earthly things, is only that we love them not, nor pursue them with that *Greediness* and *Anxiety*, as if we reckoned them our *great End* and *Hope* : And certainly, he that has any sense of a Future State, must confess this no otherwise than highly reasonable, if he consider what numerous *Temptations* and *Snares* those that *will be Rich* do fall into ; and consequently, of what mighty prejudice an over-eager Thirst after Honour or Wealth is to mens Salvation.

Mat. 19.
24.

19. It may seem a very hard Saying of our Saviour's about Rich men, That *it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for such to enter into the kingdom of God.* But I see no necessity why any Wealthy person now-a-days should think the worse of his condition upon that account: For (besides that our Saviour does very much soften this expression in another place, by saying only, That a

Mark 10.
23.

rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven); I suppose the Kingdom there spoken of, is not the Kingdom of Glory, but of Grace, as the Kingdom of God is often taken in Scripture; and that the place is to be understood in reference chiefly

Mat. 19.
21.

to our Saviour's Times, as the occasion of the words does plainly intimate: And then, considering the necessity there was in the first Ages of the Church, of mens forsaking *All* many times to follow *Christ*, together with the scorn that rich men

ex-

exposed themselves to by taking so outwardly-mean a Profession upon themselves, it is little to be wondered at, if *such* were very hardly brought to subject themselves to the Gospel upon these terms : But these reasons being ceased now in a great measure, the consequences of them must be supposed to be ceased too ; and as to Riches in themselves, they are certainly of great advantage to Religion ; and our Saviour therefore has left several marks of his Honourable Esteem of them : Three of the earliest Worshippers therefore that he had, are reckoned Persons of a Princely Rank, from whom our Saviour received Royal Presents, as the First-Fruits of that Service which *Kings* and *Great Persons* were to pay him afterwards, when by their Wealth and Authority they were to become *Nursing Fathers* to his Church : And as this was one of the first pieces of Respect he accepted upon earth,

Mat. 2. 17.

Mat. 27.
57.

earth, so the last office that was paid to him, was performed by a Rich man : When his Body was to be buried, who so fit to be intrusted with those *Sacred Remains* of his, as that *Honourable Counsellor, Joseph of Arimathea* ? Nor is it any Objection against Wealth, That our Saviour was pleased to take a poor condition upon himself; for Christ had many ends of Religion to serve by this, which no one is charged with now-a-days : This shewed, that he sought not the things of this world, but God's Glory, and the good of mens Souls alone; which must advance the Credit of his Doctrine very much : This took off from any Objection that might be made, as if his Miracles were the effects of deep search into the secrets of Nature; his Doctrine, of Learning or Study; whence the *Jews*, being confounded at his *Wisdom and Mighty Works*, cried out, *Is not this the Carpenter's son* ? This, lastly,

Mat. 13.
55.

lastly, gave his Enemies the more edge and power to persecute him as they did, and at last to bring him to that *Accursed Slavish Death*, the Death upon the Cross, wherein the Mystery of our Redemption does not a little consist. In short then, let but men make a right use of their Riches, and Christ has no Exception against them for *being Rich*. Wealth is so far then from being a Hindrance to Salvation, that as if the Court of Heaven were capable of being Brib'd, we are advised by our Saviour to *make friends to our selves there of this Mammon of unrighteousness*. Unrighteous Mammon he calls it; not that it is unrighteous *in it self*, but by reason of that unrighteous use that people generally make of it. Luk. 16.9.

20. One ill effect of Riches, as of all other Acquirements that are wont to raise Credit and Esteem to us,

Mat. 23.
5, 6, 7.

us, is, That they are apt to make men Proud and Conceited of their own Abilities; as appears more especially in the *Pharisees*, who were certainly *the vainest of men*, what on account of their Temporal, what of their Spiritual Endowments; for they loved *greetings in the market places, and the uppermost seats in the synagogues*; as our Saviour observes of them; they affected to walk in *long robes, and make broad their Philacteries*; and delighted hugely in being call'd *Rabbi*, or great Doctor, at every word. And our Saviour does not only reflect upon the *Pharisees* often for this, but in opposition to it prescribes *Humbleness* of Mind as a Temper highly necessary to such who would be called his Disciples; proposing himself more particularly, as a Pattern of this Virtue: *Learn of me*, says he, *for I am meek and lowly in heart*; and for an Encouragement to it, telling us, That
he

Mat. 11.
29.

he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. The *Heathen Eschicks* were very defective in Precepts of this nature; as no wonder it should be so, among such who made Worldly Glory and Applause the great End of their Actions. And I think it must be allowed, nothing more vain can be imagined, than a passage we meet with to this purpose in *Pliny the Younger*; a man otherwise of great Wisdom and Modesty: He tells us a Story in one of his Epistles, of a *stranger* talking accidentally with *Tacitus*; and wondring at the Learning and Judgment of the man, he desired to know *who he was*; says *Tacitus*, *You know me, and that by my Writings.* What then, replied the Gentleman, *are you Pliny, or Tacitus?* It is not to be expressed, says *Pliny*, reflecting upon this Passage, *what pleasure I took in hearing my Name brought in thus; as if Tacitus and Pliny were Proper Names, not of*

F
Men,

Men, but of Learning. Upon which he adds another Story of himself, no less fulsome; That sitting at Table one day with a Friend of his, where there was also a *Countrey Gentleman* present; says his Friend to the Gentleman, *That's Pliny*; pointing at him, and running presently into high Commendations of his Parts: *I must needs confess,* says *Pliny* here, *that I receive much fruit of my Labours from this.* And then he proceeds to vindicate this fond humour, from a parallel case of *Demosthenes*, who it seems was not a little pleased to see an *Old Woman* pointing out at him, and crying, *That's Demosthenes.* A man would wonder such Vanity as this should enter the thoughts of any wise man, as being so unseemly a humour, that (whatever people may have of it in their hearts), most are ashamed to own it even to their most Bosom-Friends: Tho I confess it is no easie matter to fix bounds

bounds to our Duty in this particular, (however nauseous such extravagant Vainglory, as that I have mentioned, must appear) : It being very unnatural to suppose a man of real worth can be otherwise than *sensible* of it himself; and it being no less so, to think that such a one should not receive *some* satisfaction from the praise and good opinion of the world: Besides that one great Encouragement is lost to Virtue by this: And our Saviour therefore presses Humility it self, in the case of *not taking the upper, but rather the lowermost seat at feasts*, under this consideration, That we shall have *worship of men* for so doing. But then, the less men have of Pride or Vainglory in their hearts, the more it's certain they have of Christ's Temper; and there is very little danger, to be sure, from the contrary extreme: And still Religion will teach us, That to Pride our selves in any Excellency,

Luke 14.
10.

cellency, is to Pride our selves in Feathers that are not our own, having nothing but what we *receive* from God ; and that to assume the glory of such things to our selves, is to derogate *so much* from God's Honour, to whom *every good and perfect gift* ought to be ascribed, with all submission and acknowledgment of our dependency on him ; accordingly as our Saviour tells us of himself, That in all things he sought *not his own, but his Father's glory.*

John 8.
50.

This was our Saviour's Life and Doctrine in respect of Duties relating to our selves.

21. Consider our Saviour's Life in respect of Duties relating to our Neighbour, and you will find no part of Religion that he lays greater *stress* upon ; however some are pleased to vilifie the Duties of it under the Notion of *Heathen Virtues* : Nor did any thing therefore
ren-

render the *Pharisees* the subject of his Scorn and Detestation more, than their gross neglects of these Duties: These Duties he comprehends in general under that great Precept of *Loving our neighbour as* John 13. *ourselves*: A Precept that he seems 34. more than ordinary fond of; and therefore he calls it a *New Command* in one place; and in another, he bids us take notice, that it was *His* John 15. *Command*; as if he were jealous 12. lest any one should rob him of the Honour of being a principal Patron and Founder of it. And to shew his Esteem of it yet farther, he pitches upon this, before all other Duties of Religion, as a Mark John 13. whereby his Disciples ought to *dis-* 35. *tinguish* themselves from the rest of the world: Nor is it to be wondered at, that Christ laid so great stress upon this Precept, since there is nothing that tends more to the Honour and Interest of Religion, than a compliance with the several

Duties of it ; these being such as are of universal applause among persons of all Religions, and such therefore, as must mightily recommend Christianity to men , when they see *that* an effectual Promoter of such things as they most esteemed ; whereas should Christians have neglected these, the Scandal would have been sure to have been imputed to their Religion, and no man would have embraced that Doctrine which seemed to confound Nature, and to root out the Principles of Mercy and Truth, the great things whereby the Happiness of this world is maintained. And this I reckon one main reason why our Saviour made Love the *Distinguishing Badge* of his Disciples. No question but there are several Marks of Faith and other Graces, whereby Christians may and ought to be distinguished from persons of other Religions : But this of Love is such a Livery, as appears beautiful and

and amiable in every body's eye :
And no wonder therefore Christ
made choice of it, as that which
must needs redound much to the
Credit of its Master.

22. Faithfulness in Dealings is
one Duty owing to our Neighbour,
that is necessary above all others for
the Peace and Welfare of mankind :
And a small matter of Religion,
one would think, might be suffici-
ent to keep men *right* in this, since
Nature it self abhors a contrary
practice : Tho indeed we find none
more wanting in this, than those
that pretend most to Religion.
The *Pharisees* Character too fre-
quently shews it self in such, that
they are *graves which appear not* ; and Luke 11.
those that walk over them are not a- 44
ware of them However scrupu-
lous they may be in other points,
they can *devour widows houses* with-
out the least remorse, and boast
themselves the Saints of God at the

same time; as if they had a particular *Licence* from Heaven to deceive: Certainly a great Dishonour to Religion this, and such as makes Christianity too often to stink in the Nostrils of Infidels and Profane persons; and no question so much the worse, by how much the persons guilty of it, do make profession of greater *Sanctity* in other things. We must not expect many Instances of this Duty of Faithfulness in our Saviour's Life, as being beneath the Excellency of his Character, to have Virtues of *so ordinary a size* mentioned of him: Tho in general we are told of him, That there was *no guile found in his mouth*. And how grateful such a Character was to him, we have one remarkable Instance, in that kind *Welcome* he gave to *Nathanael* on account of it, when being presented to him, he cried out, with no less Delight than Admiration, *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is*

1 Pet. 2.
22.

Joh. 1. 47.

no guile. We must not think that by *Guile* here, our Saviour means downright Knavery and Fraud alone; but every undermining, overreaching act, whereby we impose upon the Weakness or Ignorance of our Brother; which is plainly implied in that *Dovelike Harmlesness* Mat. 10. he recommends to his Followers: 16.

And however therefore some people may value themselves upon their Craftiness, it is certainly no great Commendation of this Quality, that our Saviour called *Herod Fox*, as one of the highest marks of his Detestation of him. Not that our Saviour designs hereby to make men weak, and unwary, or Fools in Business; for *Prudence* and *Simplicity* are well joined together by the *Poet*; and our Saviour therefore commends the *Wisdom of the Serpent*, Ibid. at the same time that he requires the *Harmlesness of the Dove*: But when Wisdom is made use of for circumventing people to their

their damage, it degenerates into Guile and Craft: And this is so abominable in Christ's esteem, that I question not but to shew, the *Pharisees* themselves might have escaped that odious Censure of Hypocrisy from him, were it not for *this more especially*, among other Vices of a like nature, that they were Godly Cheats, men that *walked in sheeps cloathing, but inwardly were ravening wolves.*

23. Mercy, or Forgiveness of Injuries and Debts, is another Duty owing to our Neighbour, which our Saviour presses very earnestly upon his Disciples: And it may seem a strange *unimitable* Pattern he proposes about this, when he commands us to be *merciful, as our heavenly father is merciful*: Though indeed there is nothing here, but what human strength, assisted by God's Grace, is well able to perform; and nothing, besides, but what

Luk 6.36.

what Nature and Right Reason
 will challenge from us: As to
 • Debts, he that will not forgive
 these *in whole*, when a Debtor is *al-*
together unable to pay; or *in part*,
 when he has reason to think the
 poor man's Necessities very great
 and pinching, must certainly be rec-
 koned a very *hard man*: And I be-
 lieve no one can read the Parable of
 the *unjust steward taking his poor deb-* Mat. 18.
tors by the throat, and hurrying them 28.
away to goal, without abhorrence of
 his Cruelty: And yet this is all
 that God's Example obliges us to,
 in respect of Debts: *He himself*
 forgives not such Debts, but which
 we are unable to pay; and he re-
 quires submission here from us, and
 acknowledgment of his Favour,
 before the Bonds are cancelled.
 And it is much the same thing in
 respect of Injuries: For are the
 Injuries of a light nature, some
 slips only of weakness or inadver-
 tency? These God passes by in us,
 with-

without particular Repentances ; and it must be a very ill temper that will not do as much as this comes to, to his offending Brother. Or are they more heinous and gross ? Here God expects Confession of our Guilt, and hearty Desires of Forgiveness, before our Pardon is *passed*: And there is no Generous Soul but will accept a like *Satisfaction*. If Punishment be necessary (as it sometimes is, in such cases) for correcting the Offender, and for the Warning and Terror of others, God's example does warrant men in this also, provided they punish Transgressors as he does, out of hatred to their Crimes, and not to their Persons : So that to imitate God's Mercy, is no other than a Duty highly reasonable and natural to men : And as there is no greater measure of Perfection than this, so we may well think Christ requires no more from us. Upon these terms, the *Forgiving* so often
in

in a day, as Christ commands, even *seventy times seven*, is no hard Duty; for by *Forgiveness* there, I cannot think Christ means an absolute passing by of Faults, though never so little; the least faults, when so often repeated, being justly interpreted of Obstinacy and gross Neglect, which are Crimes that highly deserve Punishment; and therefore *to forgive* there, is only not to bear malice or ill will against a man; in which sense we may forgive, though we correct at the same time. Nor is it any thing of an unreasonable imposition, that we are commanded to imitate God, in *loving* and *doing good* to those that injure us: For God himself is not wont to take his Enemies into his bosom, whilst they continue such, but only to afford them the ordinary Blessings of his Providence: And what Man of Honour will carry his Resentments so far, as to deny an Enemy the common offices

Mat. 18.

22.

Mat. 5. 44.

offices of humanity and pity, in time of Want? Who is not sensible of the Glory of such Acts, when men are kind and helpful to those that deserve *worst* of them?

24. But there is no part of this Duty of Forgiveness that flesh and blood rises so much against, as that
 Mat. 5.39. of *turning the other cheek*: Nor indeed is there any thing more contradictory to Reason, as well as to the Spirit of a man, than to bear injuries at this rate. Those must be very servile creatures that will stoop down thus to take their burdens; and even *Worms* therefore are taken notice of to turn again when they are trampled upon. Wherefore neither did our Saviour himself observe this Command in a literal sense; for when he was smitten by a *Servant* before the *High Priest*, we find not that he turned the other Cheek presently, but he expostulates with the person that

John 18.
22.

that did the Injury, and that not without some marks of *concern* at the Injustice done him: And generally therefore this Precept is reckoned to relate to *lesser* Injuries and Affronts, which our Saviour would have men to *put up*, rather than by drawing the Saw of Contention to widen the Breach into downright *fallings out*; or to give greater trouble to our selves and others, in Law-Suits and exchange of Blows, than the Injury is worth: In which sense this Precept of our Saviour's is no less reasonable than any other part of the Duty of Forgiveness. It may seem strange indeed to some, that the receiving a Blow on the Face should be reckoned here among *lesser* Injuries, when it is thought by many now-a-days to deserve little less than a *Stab*: But we must consider here, that our Saviour spoke to persons of *mean Rank*, among whom Injuries of this nature are not so highly provoking; though

though no question the practice of this Age in demanding the *Blood* of each other upon these and the like Affronts, (let the *Quality* of the Person be what it will) is sufficiently against our Saviour's Command here: And it is certainly nothing of sound Reason, but vain Custom alone, that makes people stand at this high rate upon *Pantheio's* of Honour: For how unreasonable is it in it self, that nothing less than the Death of a man, and in that the ruin of a *whole Family* many times, shall serve as an Atonement for giving me *the Lye*, suppose? And what a Madness is it in any case, because a man has injured me, that therefore I will venture my Life with him upon *equal Terms*, in way of making my self Satisfaction? I will confess here, that Honour is a great Blessing to men, and such therefore as they ought to be very tender of preserving: And since Custom has brought

brought it to *that*, that a man cannot *tamely* sit down, and suffer some kind of Abuses (no ways heinous in themselves neither), without exposing himself to Ignominy and Disgrace all his life after, it makes the case very hard: Some mens Livelihoods, we know, depend upon the Reputation of their Courage; and every other person has just reason to keep himself from being despised and trampled upon: But as Custom and Connivence have brought those *false Notions* of Honour into Fashion, upon which this Murdering Practice is founded; so we presume Authority might soon banish them out of the world, by good Laws, and strict Execution; as has been done in a great measure in a Neighbouring Kingdom. And till this be done, it is little to be expected that other Arguments should signify much, for rooting such *fond Principles* out of mens minds. How-

ever, true it is, That no greater Scandal can lye upon this Age, than that it should be reckoned the greatest Reproach in it, to obey a plain Command of *Christ's*; and that nothing can be imagined more *desperate*, than for men to hazard their lives thus *in the very Breach* of a Command, which (to say no worse) must highly endanger their Souls to all Eternity.

25. Another Duty of Love owing to our Neighbour, is that of Charity, or a being kind and beneficial to persons in Misery and Want. In which our Saviour did more especially *signalize* himself: For it was the great business of his

A^ct. 10. 38. Life, we are told, to *go about, doing good*: And accordingly we find him every where engaged; sometimes as a Physician to the Sick, visiting and curing them of their several Distempers; and among these, the poorer sort were generally

rally the objects of his Tenderneſs and Care ; the Maimed, the Halt, the Blind, the Leper, ſuch as he found in the ſtreets incapacitated for labour, and ſo begging for a Subſiſtence. Sometimes we find him as a Reliever of mens Neceſſities in other ways: His Bowels yearned at the Faſting of the Multitude in the Wilderneſs ; and ſo, rather than ſend them away empty, he firſt beſtows upon them all the little Proviſions he could get, and then *twice* works a Miracle to ſupply what was wanting. And it is very obſervable, That almoſt *all* the Miracles our Saviour wrought, had ſome Charitable work for their ſubject ; contrary to thoſe of *Moses* and the reſt of the Prophets. It would certainly have ſerved as well for answering the chief Deſign of his Miracles, if they had been matter only of Amazement and Aſtoniſhment to the people ; for thereby it would have appear-

Mar. 19.

34.

ed, That he was an extraordinary Person sent from God; and this was the main End of his Miracles, to attest the Truth and Divinity of his Commission: But this was not enough, he thought, unless Charity also was added to them: Our Saviour would have his Wondrous Works receive no less Glory from the *Goodness*, than the *Strangeness* of them: All which we may justly think our Saviour did, to shew himself an Example of *that* which he desired the most of any thing to engage his Followers to the practice of, as being not only a most excellent Duty in it self, and most agreeable with his own Temper, but such also as tends in the highest degrees to the Honour and Interests of his Religion; for Charity is the most beautiful part of a Christians Badge; and there is nothing that attracts the eyes and hearts of men more than *this*. Even the *Jews* themselves therefore were wrought
by

by *this* into a good opinion of *Christ*, when the Excellency of his Doctrine made little impression upon their hearts: *He hath done all things well*, say they; *he maketh the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.* Mar. 7.37.

The Primitive Christians brought infinite Credit to their Religion by it, when in the time of a great Plague at *Alexandria*, they visited the Sick, and relieved the poor, and buried the Dead, *even* of their Heathen Adversaries, when their ~~own~~ Friends would take no care of them. And it would be no less Discredit to our Faith, were that true which the *Romanists* object against us, That our Religion is *barren* and *unfruitful* in such good works as these: Though I think we may safely enough defie them to make good their Charge; when a Reverend *Author* in King *James* the First's time, has given us a particular Account of Charities bestowed upon Colleges, Hospitals,

Free-Schools, and the like Pious Uses, within the compass of Sixty Years since the Reformation, amounting to a Million of Money: That which he challenges *any* Age of Popery to parallel in this Kingdom. And I think this Age has given sufficient Evidence to stop the mouths of our Adversaries, of the respect they bear to this *great Duty* of Religion, in those Liberal Contributions they have made of late to *Distressed Strangers*, as well as in every other Instance of Charity. Which also ought the more to be taken notice of, for that it is done in a free generous way, from the voluntary motions and inclinations of the Benefactors alone; not *grudgingly, or of necessity*, as it frequently happened in former times, when people were frightened into Charity by their Confessors, sorely against their wills, only to make composition for Pardon of their sins. *May our light still so shine before*

before men, that others seeing our good works, may glorifie our Father which is in heaven.

26. There is nothing that tends to the ease and benefit of mankind, that seems beneath our Saviour's Care : And therefore, besides these greater Duties that we owe to our Neighbour, he insists upon others that may seem of *lesser* moment, though they are of no small comfort to those among whom we converse. Such, particularly, is that of not being *Angry with our Brother rashly, or without a cause* : For indeed there is nothing that destroys the Blessings of Society more, than this Vice of Anger ; what Solomon Prov. 21. says of *an angry woman*, being certainly as true of *an angry man*, *It is better to live in a wilderness, than where such be.* Besides, that the Consequences of this Vice are oftentimes very mischievous and fatal ; Anger being a Passion of a

G 4

very

very bloody and desperate nature ;
 wherever it is suffered to grow to
a head, it knows no rules or bounds.
 The two Sons of *Zebedee* would
 have destroyed a whole City in a
 mad Fit of this Passion, had Christ
 been as ready to furnish them with
 Instruments of Revenge, as they
 were to call for them : And we
 have multitudes of Instances in
 every Age, of peoples murdering
 their *Dearest Friends*, and doing
 other things in their Anger, which
 have proved Wounds to their Re-
 putations and their Minds, *never*
 to be cured in this World : Where-
 fore our Saviour presses the Duty
 of not being Angry, under as
 great obligations as any other Du-
 ty of Religion ; for he tells us,
 That no less a danger attends the
 breach of it, than *that* of the
 Judgment, and of Hell-Fire. And
 to shew of how great esteem it is
 in God's sight, he represents it as
 such, without which God will ac-
 cept

Mat. 5. 22.

cept no Sacrifice from us; *Leave thy gift at the Altar*, therefore he says, *go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift*. Not that our Saviour would make his Disciples hereby such *poor passive* creatures, as to hinder them from expressing their Resentments with shews of Anger, upon *just* occasions: For by commanding us not to be angry with our Brother *without a cause*, he plainly insinuates, that in some cases a man may have *just* cause of being angry: And we find therefore that he himself looked upon the *Pharisees with anger at the hardness of their hearts*; and that (by the Privilege of his Prophetick Office) he called *Herod Fox*, in way of Indignation, when the Message was brought that *Herod had a design to kill him*. Wherefore it is only some *Excesses* and *Irregularities* of this Passion, that our Saviour reproveth, when he condemns

Mark 3. 5.

Luke 13.
31.

demns Anger as a Vice : As, when it breaks out upon trivial occasions ; when it is disproportioned to its cause ; when it swells to immoderate heights ; when it rankles and breeds bad Blood in us ; every of which are things not only so mischievous in their consequences, but so unseemly in themselves besides, that if Christ had not forbid them, our *own Consciences* would have done it : And there is nothing of a Wise or Brave man therefore, but though he may be taken sometimes in such Indecencies, is ashamed of himself afterwards. Whilst the Blood indeed is up, and the mouth swells with big words, a man appears to himself very Great, and he Lords it with no small Pride and Tyranny over those who are bound in *Duty* or *Interest* not to oppose him : But he that stands by, and considers the poor grounds upon which this *deal a-do* is often made, is so far from admiring the Great-

Greatness of the man's Soul, that he does but pity his Weakness all the while. They are the shallowest streams that are generally most Noisy, and most subject to overflow : And a man therefore that values his Reputation, would keep a strict hand over himself about this Passion, tho he had no other obligation to restrain him.

27. Censoriousness is another Vice opposite to the Duties of Love, which may seem of *lesser* moment to our Neighbour's good, though it cause none of the least uneasinesses to him; This our Saviour frequently reflects upon the *Pharisees* for; who, it may seem, reckoned it a greater piece of Holiness to Judge *other* peoples Faults, than to Correct their *own* : And all their Discourse therefore ran upon this subject; and they could not so much as Pray to God, but they must tell him of their Neighbours Faults,

Luke 18.
11.

Faults, and thank him that they were *not as other men, not as this Publican*: It was much the worse, to be sure, that their Censoriousness was generally attended with Pride and Uncharitable Aggravations; though it had been bad enough, had it been only a supercilious reproving their Neighbours continually for lesser faults, which for the most part they had no other ground to condemn, than that they were not according to their own Pedantick ways of walking: For this is what our Saviour means, by their *beholding the mote in their brothers eye*, which gave occasion to his Precept of *not judging*. And indeed this must render Converse so very uneasie to men, and consequently Religion so uncomfortable a thing, when upon every appearance of evil they must be disciplined and Schooled by their Friends, that it is more to be feared they should be hardened against *all* Re-
proof,

Mat. 7.
1, 3.

proof, than to be hoped they should amend by it; which is the greatest dis-service we can do either to Religion or our Neighbour's Soul. No question but to reprove people with Candor and Discretion, is an excellent Duty in it self; and there is no office of Love more worthy the name of *true* Friendship: But to perform this aright, requires more of Temper and Prudence than the Vulgar are generally Masters of. And that men may use all Caution therefore in it, we find our Saviour more solicitous in condemning the opposite *Extreme*, than in enforcing the *Duty*. Particularly, where Reproof is like to do more harm than good, Christ has given us Advice very plainly, in a prudential way, not to expose Religion and our selves in such cases: *Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot, and turn again and rent you.* Though this is

to

Mat. 7. 6.

to be understood, not without some Reserve to Parents, and Ministers, and Masters of Families, and the like, whose Duty it is to be *instant in season and out of season*, in reproofing those committed to their Charge; as there is much less danger of their Reproof being despised by such, than by Strangers or Friends; it being the proper business of *their* Office to do this, which few are so unreasonable as not to make some allowance for; and more especially, these having Authority on their side to back their Reproofs with Correction, where the former work not the effect designed.

This as to our Saviour's Life and Doctrine in respect of Duties relating to our Neighbour.

28. I should now put an end to this Discourse, but that I think it convenient to answer some general Objections that may be brought against

gainst it : The principal of which is, The Example of the *Primitive Christians* ; whose rigid observance of many Duties, it must be confessed, was much beyond the Measures prescribed here ; especially in respect of Temperance, Contempt of the World, Mortification, and the like self-denying Virtues. And now in answer to this, I must declare, That I cannot think the *Primitive Christians* practice an adequate rule of walking to us : For though their Zeal be certainly much to be admired, yet it is plain in some things they went as much beyond the bounds of Prudence, as of their Duty : Particularly in the case of Martyrdom ; a thing they grew so fond of in a little time, as to run themselves *wilfully* into Dangers, and even to *provoke* their Persecutors to put them to Death : As if our Saviour had given no such Advice to his Disciples, to *fly from City to City*, to avoid

Mat. 10.

Per. 23.

Persecution ; and this they did sometimes in ways scarce warrantable : Such was that of *Apphianus*, a famous Martyr of *Palestine*, holding the Prefect *Urbanus*'s hand when he was going to Sacrifice. Infomuch, that the Church thought fit at last in several Councils to blame this unnatural and overzealous Ambition. And neither were their Austerities less strained beyond the Limits prescribed in the Gospel : *Origen*'s chusing to lye upon the ground, and walk bare-foot many years, was more, I am sure, than any Law of *Christ* obliged him to ; as likewise were those severe Rules of Temperance, which he and others observed in those days : Of which we have a remarkable Instance in one *Alcibiades*, who was wont to live upon Bread and Water for a long time, till it was *Revealed* (says the Historian) to *Ascalus* the Martyr, That the *Man* did not well in refusing God's
Crea-

Creatures, and giving offence to his weak brethren : Upon which *Alcibiades* was prevailed upon to eat and drink as other people, and gave Thanks to God for it. And the same must be said as to their Renouncing the World, to that degree, many of them, as well nigh to fall under the Apostle's Censure, of *not providing for their own* ; at least, to come within the compass of that *voluntary humility, and neglecting the body*, which the same Apostle declares to have only a *shew of wisdom in them*. And it would be endless to insist upon every other Duty, wherein the Zeal of those Times was wont to supererogate ; as in Watchings and Fastings, in Vows of Chastity, in unmerciful Penances, and the like.

29. Though here I cannot but admire the Wisdom of God's Providence, in ordering things at this

H

rate,

rate, as well for the good of those that were *already* Converted, as for the Conversion of others in those times: For considering what Persecutions the *Primitive Christians* were to lye under, it was little less than necessary to infuse such Principles as these into their minds: By this means their voluntary Auste-rities became a sort of *hardning* to them, to make them fit Soldiers for that severe Service they were called to: For it was no great difficulty for such to endure long and cruel Imprisonments, who were wont to lye upon the bare earth, and fare courly in their ordinary way of life. And this must mightily take off from the Pain and Terror of those Tortures which they daily saw inflicted upon others, and were at last condemned to themselves. This made the great *Champions* of the Church, when they mounted the Stage, to be more concerned for their Fel-
low-

low-Sufferers, lest through Weakness or Tenderness of Body, they should be tempted to renounce their Faith (as not being used to such *Ascetick Discipline*), than for any miseries they saw prepared for themselves. Of which we have a notable Instance in the case of *Blandina*, a Martyr of *France* ; though by an admirable Fortitude she frustrated the Fears of her Friends, as well as the Expectation of her Enemies. And of much greater necessity was their Contempt of the things of this life, for engaging them to maintain their *Profession* with Resolution and Constancy, amidst the Persecutions they lay under. For men that are *Wedded* to the World, are very loth to be *Divorced* from it ; and there is nothing more difficult, than for *such* to follow *Christ*, who are fast tied to Riches, and Honour, and Pleasures. The *First Christians* looked upon these things as little better

than the *Incumbrances* of life ; and like true *Sojourners* therefore upon Earth, they desired nothing more, than just enough to bear their *Charges* to Heaven. So if Persecution seized their Estates, it was but like robbing them of an *upper Garment*, which they had little need of, and which they were ready enough to throw off of their own accord ; and it could be no doubtful Choice to such, whether they should part with this, or a good Conscience, which they knew was a Treasure to them to all Eternity. If Persecution reached their Lives also, it brought them but the sooner to their Journey's end, they knew ; and they had little reason to be otherwise than contented with this, who proposed so small a share to themselves in the Comforts and Enjoyments of this World.

30. Nor do I less admire God's Gracious Providence in ordering things at this rate, on account of the *Gentiles* of those times; there being no means more likely than this, for Converting them: For these were a sort of Principles which the *Philosophy* of that Age ran very much upon; and we nowhere meet with greater Examples of Severity of Manners, as to Temperance, and Mortification, and Contempt of the World, than the *Schools* of the *Heathens* would at least pretend to in those times. The *Stoicks* were extremely rigid this way, who bid Defiance to all the Comforts of Sense; and looked upon it as a great part of *Wisdom*, to be mean and sordid in their Habit, pale in their Looks, and poor in their Purses. The *Platonists*, little inferior to these in Strictness of Discipline, who talked as if they lived *out* of their Bodies, upon Air and Contemplation alone;

Concerning whose Austerities, there are highly remarkable Instances to be produced, in the Lives of *Epictetus* among the *Stoicks*, and *Plotinus* among the *Platonists*. Though it may seem more considerable, perhaps, to instance in the Emperor *Julian* the Apostate; a man of high Birth, and great Power at last, and consequently much exposed to Temptations of Luxury and Softness; who yet to the last, we are told, was wont to lye upon a hard course Quilt, and rise continually in the middle of the night; to forbid all Delicacies to be brought into his Camp, and to feed upon the *Common Soldiers* Provisions; which things he himself glories in, and professes to have learned them from his *Heathen Masters*. Now the *Primitive Christians* being to converse and dispute with such people as these, how could they more effectually recommend the Gospel to them, than

than by shewing themselves Examples of like Severity with what they practised? Had they not done this, *Christianity* would certainly have been thought as loose and scandalous a *Profession*, as it was counted *Foolish* by these vain Pretenders to Wisdom and Virtue. And considering how mightily such *shews* of Holiness are apt to take among the *Vulgar*, the Philosophers of those times would have had the greatest advantage by this means, of confirming the people in their *Gentile* Superstitions, whilst they compared their *own* lives, with the lives of the *Christians*. And therefore in process of time, when Persecution being ceased, the *Primitive Christians* began to allow themselves a greater *Liberty* about these things, we find the Apostate *Julian* making it the great subject of his *Raillery* upon the *Antiochians*, (whom we must suppose to be generally *Christians*, by *Naxianzen's*

writing in their vindication), that the chief ground of their offence at him, was the Roughness of his Beard, and the Austerity of his Life; that he *made War* continually with his Belly, and delighted not in *Dancing* and *Shows*, as they did. And it is to the same purpose what he tells us of *Constantine the Great*, the first Christian Emperor, that finding none among the gods like himself, and so fit for him to converse with, he betook himself to *Luxury* and *Intemperance*, as his *Tutelar Deities*, with whom he lived very contentedly; and recommended his Sons afterwards to their care. A little innocent freedom, we must think, in the *Primitive Christians*, was enough to occasion such malicious Reflections from their Adversaries: And this made it necessary for them to depart from their Right (as it were) in this respect; and to strain the Bow not a little the other way, that

that their Enemies might have no pretence (if possible) to *speak reproachfully* of them or their Religion.

31. But then our Saviour did not design that his Church should continue in the *Wilderness* always; and God no more envies a *Canaan* of Worldly Felicity to us, than he did of old to his people the *Jews*. The *Primitive Christians* Examples are certainly an excellent Argument for whetting peoples Industry, and provoking Emulation: For if they endured so great hardship for the sake of *Christ*, it is a great shame for men now-a-days to refuse Obedience to the more easie and rational Precepts of the Gospel. But *Christ's* Example is the only *obligatory* Pattern to us; and since we find nothing *there* of those Austerities which the *Primitive Christians* observed, we have little reason sure, by adding these of our own

Mat. 11.
30.

own accord, to make Christ's *easy yoke* heavier than he designed. There were *special* Reasons, we see, that moved God's Providence to incline the *Primitive Christians* to do what they did of this nature, which are now ceased in a great measure: For God be praised, we live not in such an Age as they did, where our Lives, our Liberties, and Estates, are in danger of being taken from us every minute; but these are guarded by Laws, and secured to us by a Wonderful Providence; and there is no reason we should despise such a Blessing as this, but use that with Comfort, and Thanks to God, which he has given us to enjoy in Safety. Nor do we live among such persons whom we ought to *consider*, as the *Primitive Christians* did the *Heathens*, lest they take offence at our *just Liberty*: For if any are offended amongst us, it is their own fault, having the Scriptures in their hands

to

to read (which the *Heathen* had not) to inform them better. Those Scriptures which will teach them, either that a greater Liberty is allowed by Christ than the *Primitive Christians* used, or at least that they ought not to think the worse of Religion for other mens failings in it ; nor yet to censure and condemn others for taking greater freedom than themselves approve of, unless they can plainly make it out to be contrary to the Precepts of the Gospel. To abstain from little *Indifferent* things, rather than offend our weak Brother, is certainly a very reasonable Duty : But in such things as these, which affect the *whole Course* of our lives, and are of mighty concern to the good of men, if other mens Weakness, and not the Scriptures, must be a Rule of walking to us, it will be impossible to know where to fix our Duty. Thus I think the Objection about the *Primitive Christians*

ftians Example is fufficiently answered.

32. Another Objection that may be made againft this Difcourfe is, That our Saviour's Doctrine, as it is contained in the History of his Life, is not a fufficient measure of Perfection, and therefore not fit to be propofed *by it felf* as a Rule of Life; becaufe our Saviour in many things condefcended to his Difciples Weaknefs, leading them by Precepts fuited to their *Infant* Eftate, as they were yet but *Novices* in Religion; and referving others of a more *fublime* nature for after-times, when the Spirit being poured out in extraordinary measures, they were more advanced in Knowledge and the fear of God: Which may feem to be implied in that *Saying* of our Saviour's to his Difciples, *I have yet many things to fay unto you, but ye cannot bear them now; howbeit, when he, the Spirit of Truth,*

John 16.
12.

is come, he will guide you into all truth.
 But that this is no Objection against
 us, will easily be made appear,
 when we consider in the first place,
 that the substance of it is false and
 groundless in it self, as far as it re-
 lates to matters of Practice gene-
 rally necessary to Salvation, with
 which alone we have to do. For
 it is plain, our Saviour prescribes
 Practical Doctrines to his Disciples,
 of as great *Perfection* as any con-
 tained in his Religion: Such is that
 of *cutting off their right hands, and* Mat. 5.
pulling out their right eyes when they 29, 30.
offended them: Such is that of *lo-*
ving their enemies, and doing good — 44.
to them that hated them. Such,
 lastly, is that of *taking up their* Mat. 16.
cross, and forsaking father and mo- 24.
ther, life and estate, for the Gospel.
 For I think there is no greater Ar-
 gument of the *Perfection* of any
 Precept, than the Difficulty of it;
 as is evidently implied in that Say-
 ing of our Saviour's to the young
 man,

Mat. 19. *man, If thou wilt be perfect, go sell
21. that thou hast, and give it to the poor.*

And I am sure there are no Precepts in the Gospel more difficult than these ; and therefore had our Saviour thought his Disciples unfit to bear any Doctrines of a Practical nature, no question but he would have concealed these as soon as any others, being the most likely to discourage his Disciples from following him : Besides that no greater *Perfection* can be supposed, than those *Sayings* of our Saviour's to his Disciples do expressly enjoin,

Mat. 5.48. *That they should be holy as God is holy, and perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect.* Wherefore also that *Passage* of St. John must necessarily be interpreted to refer only to some extraordinary matters which concerned the Oeconomy of Christ's Church in those times : Such was the *calling in* of the *Gentiles* ; a matter that the Apostles were so hardly brought to believe, that it required

required a special Revelation from God to ascertain it to them. Such also was the Abolishing the Ceremonial Law of *Moses*, which occasioned such violent Conteſts for a long time in the Church. Theſe indeed were things that we may ſuppoſe the Apoſtles ill able to bear, at the time our Saviour ſpoke, as being poſſeſſed with ſtrong Prejudices againſt them from their youth up: And it might well require an extraordinary Effuſion of the Spirit to *guide them into ſuch Truths*, which after all, they could ſcarce be perſuaded to believe. This Interpretation is the rather to be received, becauſe our Saviour tells his Diſciples in the foregoing Chapter, that he had *made known* John 15.
unto them all things that he had heard 15.
of his Father; it being very hard to reconcile this with the other place, if by *all things* here, is not to be meant all things neceſſary to Salvation.

Mat. 7.
13, 14.

33. A Third and last Objection that I shall mention, against this Discourse, may be drawn from those places of Scripture wherein the ways of Salvation are represented as very difficult, and hard to be found; particularly, that *Saying* of our Saviour's, where he exhorts his Disciples *to strive to enter in at the strait gate, because narrow is the way that leadeth to life, and few there be that find it*: This seeming contrary to what is intimated all along in this Discourse; the main drift of which has been, to make Religion appear easie and natural to men. Now to answer this Objection, our chief business will be to reconcile this *Saying* of our Saviour's with that other of his, where he declares his *yoke to be easie, and his burden light*; this last making no less for every thing I have said, than the other does *against* it. And it will be no hard matter to do this, by considering, That *Christ's Yoke*
is

is indeed easie *in it self*; the Precepts of his Religion are no other than such as men assisted by God's Grace may even with Comfort and Pleasure perform. But as the easiest Yoak may become *hard* by fretting and striving against it; so *Christ's* Religion is made difficult to men, through Prejudices and evil Habits, which put them upon endeavours of shaking it off, the better to satisfy some unruly Passions and Lusts, which gain the dominion over them. And this is that alone which *straitens* the Gate to Heaven; this makes the way thither seem rough, and melancholy, and desolate, a *very Wilderness* to many that tread therein. Otherwise, far be it from God to delight himself in seeing men struggling with difficulties which he himself has made. He that courts and importunes us to come to Happiness so earnestly as he does, what an odd Notion of him must it imply,

to make the means of attaining this *hard* ; as if he designed it on purpose that few might arrive at it ? No, there are no Difficulties in the way to Heaven, but what we make to our selves by our own gross fault. Without this, the Road to Heaven would be as void of *Briars and Thorns* , as Heaven it self is ; *The ways of wisdom being ways of pleasantness* , as *Solomon* speaks, and *all her paths are peace* : But then the Difficulties which men have brought upon themselves in the ways of Godliness, through their own Corruptions , are certainly none of the least : And these are such as the greatest Pretenders to Perfection may find abundant cause to be sensible of, tho they aim at nothing higher than what is prescribed in this Discourse : For even to be Just and Righteous in our Dealings, Chaste in our Actions and Thoughts, Humble and Charitable in our Conversations, (if we

we consult Experience, and not the nature of the things themselves) are not such easie Duties, but that many who reckon themselves great Proficients in Grace, are found notoriously to fail in them. At least, there are few, it's to be feared, that make a Conscience of these or any other Duties, so far as they ought in reason to do. And therefore considering the Hypocrisy of the world on one hand, and the too gross Immorality of it on the other, it were well if there were not too great grounds for that *Saying* of our Saviour, *That narrow is the way to life, and few there be that find it.* Though still it is to be hoped, the Few there mentioned are no inconsiderable Number, only as opposed to the vast Company of *Jews, Turks, Infidels*, and Prophane persons, who proudly despise the Means of Salvation which Christ has offered to them. And for those who have a

Saviour to trust in, and a Merciful God to fly to, who make allowances for the common Infirmities of Human Nature, we trust that a wide Gate of Salvation may be opened to such, as long as with Faith and Sincerity they endeavour to walk in the way of God's Commands, and pretend not to ~~set~~ the Cripple before him.

34. Wherefore, in short, the Sum of this Discourse is, That the Religion of Christ, according to his Precepts and Example (and we need no better Rule to judge of it by) is a most admirably Wise, Gracious, and Manlike Religion; such as *accomplishes* Human Nature in the highest degrees it is capable of in this life; imposing nothing mean or servile upon us: Such as looks upon Ceremonies only as things indifferent; neither refusing what is Decent, or commanded by just Authority, nor yet encouraging Vain

or

or Superstitious Observancies : Such as commends a Sober and a Rational Piety to us ; a Piety that consists not in high Notions, or wild Expressions of Zeal, but in Worshipping and Serving God with Diligence and Sincerity : Such as *takes off* from the Exorbitancies of our Passions and Lusts , so as to make us most easie to our selves, and most like to God, without debarring us the innocent Comforts of this life. Such, lastly, as engages us to be good natured, and to throw off those selfish and unnatural Dispositions, which are the Ruin of Society, and a Reproach to Mankind : Than which, as I think there can no *Ideas* of Religion be framed more Excellent, so let us study to conform our Lives to these, and I question not but we become *True Followers of Christ Jesus.*

The first of these is the
 question of the
 second is the
 third is the
 fourth is the
 fifth is the
 sixth is the
 seventh is the
 eighth is the
 ninth is the
 tenth is the
 eleventh is the
 twelfth is the
 thirteenth is the
 fourteenth is the
 fifteenth is the
 sixteenth is the
 seventeenth is the
 eighteenth is the
 nineteenth is the
 twentieth is the
 twenty-first is the
 twenty-second is the
 twenty-third is the
 twenty-fourth is the
 twenty-fifth is the
 twenty-sixth is the
 twenty-seventh is the
 twenty-eighth is the
 twenty-ninth is the
 thirtieth is the
 thirty-first is the
 thirty-second is the
 thirty-third is the
 thirty-fourth is the
 thirty-fifth is the
 thirty-sixth is the
 thirty-seventh is the
 thirty-eighth is the
 thirty-ninth is the
 fortieth is the
 forty-first is the
 forty-second is the
 forty-third is the
 forty-fourth is the
 forty-fifth is the
 forty-sixth is the
 forty-seventh is the
 forty-eighth is the
 forty-ninth is the
 fiftieth is the
 fifty-first is the
 fifty-second is the
 fifty-third is the
 fifty-fourth is the
 fifty-fifth is the
 fifty-sixth is the
 fifty-seventh is the
 fifty-eighth is the
 fifty-ninth is the
 sixtieth is the
 sixty-first is the
 sixty-second is the
 sixty-third is the
 sixty-fourth is the
 sixty-fifth is the
 sixty-sixth is the
 sixty-seventh is the
 sixty-eighth is the
 sixty-ninth is the
 seventieth is the
 seventy-first is the
 seventy-second is the
 seventy-third is the
 seventy-fourth is the
 seventy-fifth is the
 seventy-sixth is the
 seventy-seventh is the
 seventy-eighth is the
 seventy-ninth is the
 eightieth is the
 eighty-first is the
 eighty-second is the
 eighty-third is the
 eighty-fourth is the
 eighty-fifth is the
 eighty-sixth is the
 eighty-seventh is the
 eighty-eighth is the
 eighty-ninth is the
 ninetieth is the
 ninety-first is the
 ninety-second is the
 ninety-third is the
 ninety-fourth is the
 ninety-fifth is the
 ninety-sixth is the
 ninety-seventh is the
 ninety-eighth is the
 ninety-ninth is the
 hundredth is the

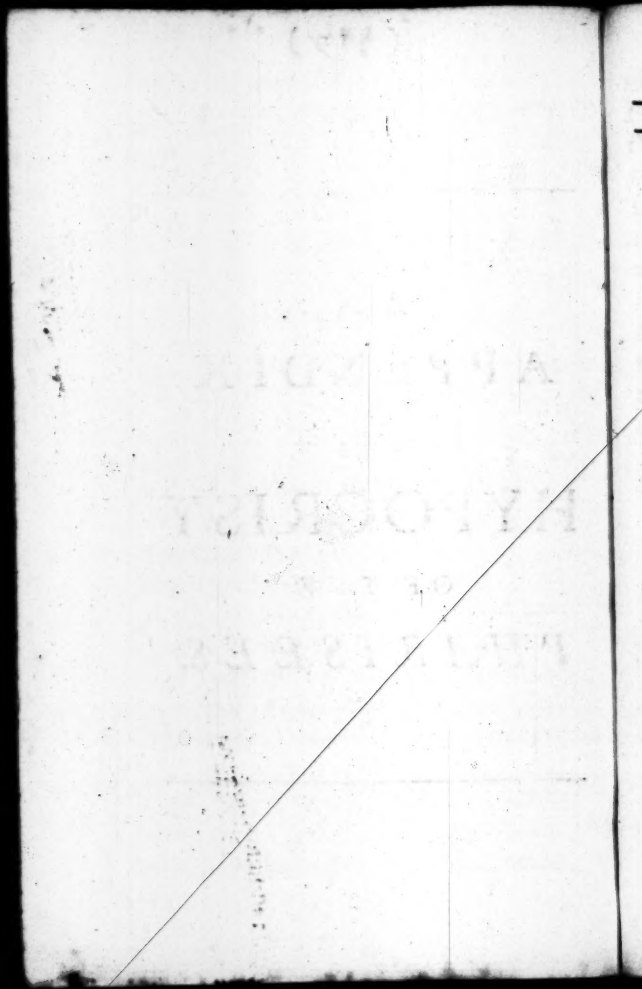
A N
APPENDIX

Concerning the

HYPOCRISY

OF THE

PHARISEES.



A N
APPENDIX

Concerning the

Hypocrisy of the Pharisees.

THOUGH Hypocrisy
be often objected by our
Saviour against the *Pha-
risees*, yet I could never
be of the opinion, That they were
gross downright Hypocrites; such,
I mean, as take a *Form of Godliness*
upon them, only for Secular Inter-
est, to serve designs of Knavery
and Injustice, and who know them-
selves to be Hypocrites all the
while. I have so much Charity
for Human Nature, as to hope
there are few such Creatures as
these

these in the World ; these being but one Remove from *Atheists* : For sure, did men believe that there was a God who governed the world, they durst never affront him so directly, as to make use of his Name and Religion to cloak the most profligate Designs. The greatest *Impostors* in the world, I believe, may have acted out of Principles of Conscience : And I take *Mahomet* himself to have had much more of the Enthusiast in him, than the Hypocrite. Nor ought it to be thought strange, that such horrid Doctrines and Practices as many of these have been the *Authors* of, should be the effects of a good Intention : For there is nothing so absurd, which a crazed head, or vitiated understanding will not believe to be right sometimes. With what strange Assurance will some Madmen fancy themselves Kings and Emperours, and not be beaten out of their Conceit by all that

men

men can say ; but turn even their Rags and their Chains, and every thing else that can be objected to them, into *Ensigns* of Majesty. It is the same unhappy Influence that rules in the heads of most Enthusiasts. And though the Heads of some of them may not be turned at this rate, yet there are many ways of debauching Conscience, and stifling *Natural Light* in such ; and when strong Affections and Lusts meet with weak or prejudiced Judgments, it is no hard matter for *such* to persuade themselves by degrees into the belief of whatever almost they please. It was certainly a most perverse piece of Stupidity in the *Jews*, after all the Miracles and Good Works that our Saviour wrought among them, to believe him worthy to be Crucified at last : And yet our Saviour him-
Luke 23.
 self imputes this grossest of Crimes³⁴
 to Weakness, and not to Malice ;
 and *St. Peter* in some measure ex-
cuses,

A& 3. 17. cuses, not only the People, but
 their *Rulers* also, upon this ac-
 count: Of such strange force were
 the Prejudices of Education, Ho-
 nour, and Worldly Interest, for
 perverting the Understandings of
 these men. But if in such a case as
 this, men could refuse to hearken
 to the strongest Evidences of Rea-
 son and Sense, no wonder that in
 any other case they can *stop their*
ears to the voice of the charmer, charm
he never so wisely.

2. That the *Pharisees* did real-
 ly act in the main upon Principles
 of Religion and Conscience, we
 have good ground to think, when
 we consider that Character our Sa-
 viour gives of them, That they
 were spiritually proud, and strange-
 ly opinionative of their Righteous-
 ness; by which they fancied they
 could merit Salvation at God's
 hands: As we find one of them
 therefore justifying himself before
 God

God in the Temple ; and another very confidently telling our Saviour, That he had *kept all the commandments from his youth up* : For

Mat. 19.
20.

sure it is impossible to think that men who serve not God with Sincerity, should flatter themselves at this rate into opinions of their Righteousness ; especially , that such opinions should stick by them at the Day of Judgment : As our Saviour plainly points at this sort of men, when he tells us, That *many*

Mat. 7. 21.

shall come to him at that day, and say, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wondrous works? For how absurd is it to think , that Hypocrites can have the Impudence to plead at this rate before *Christ*, at such a time when they cannot but be sensible the thoughts of their hearts are all open and revealed to him ? Without doubt the utmost shame and confusion of face shall belong to
such

such then: Such are conscious to themselves of their own Wickedness; they know that what good things they did in this life, were not done in Sincerity of heart; and it is not a fit time surely *then* to urge those things in their Vindication, which being done in Hypocrisy, have been condemned long since with the severest Sentence by their Judge: Nor can I well perceive the force of that Declaration of our Saviour's, *Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*; if the Pharisees were downright Hypocrites: For what a mighty business is this, that *Christ* should require the Righteousness of his Disciples to be greater than that of those who were little better than *Atheists*? Who were all false and impious at bottom; who had nothing in them of that Holiness they pretended to? Who
does

Mat. 5. 20.

does not perceive the small *Emphasis*, or rather Vanity of such a Declaration? Besides, that our Saviour's after-Discourse is a plain *Comment* upon this Text; wherein he shews his meaning to be, That his Disciples Righteousness ought to exceed the *Pharisees* Righteousness, not in *Sincerity*, but in *Perfection* of Obedience: And *that* by spiritualizing the Law of *Moses*, and reforming those Corruptions which the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* had brought into it by their *Traditions*.

3. Nor is it a sufficient Argument against this, That our Saviour describes the *Pharisees* so often by the Character of *gross Hypocrites*; as that they *did all things to be seen of men*; that they were *whited sepulchres*, and *graves which appeared not*; that *for a pretence they made long prayers*. For it is usual in Scripture for God to judge other-
Mat. 23. 5
Mat. 23.
27.
Luk. 11.
44.
Mat. 23.
14.
wise

wife of mens actions, than they themselves think or design: And if in outward appearance any action be vicious, and so of bad Example, God will take it many times in the *worst* sense, and impute it as done on purpose, and of malice, though there were no such thing in the person's Intentions. Thus in the case of Idolatry, God tells the *Israelites*, That they worshipped *stocks and stones* for their God, and cried to those senseless things for help; whereas indeed it was only in outward appearance they did this; and they worshipped God all this while under the *Similitude* of those Graven Images they fell down before. Thus also men are said in Scripture to *deny God*, and to make *gods* of their *bellies* and their *wealth*, when they serve those chiefly; not that they disbelieve the true God, or think their bellies and their wealth to be *gods* really; but only that their outward actions look as if

Ex. 44. 17.

Prov. 30. 7.

Phil. 3. 19.

if their inward thoughts were of this nature : In like manner as the *Pharisees* are stiled Hypocrites by our Saviour ; not as tho they were such in a strict sense of the word, but because they acted *like* Hypocrites. Their Religion indeed was just such a sort of Religion, as we may suppose that of Hypocrites would be ; a Religion that busied it self only about such Duties as were most apt to gain Applause and Admiration from the world ; making light of other matters that were of no less weight in themselves : Such a Religion, as taught them to make *long prayers*, but to *devour widows houses* ; to give *gifts* to the Temple, but to let their *Parents* starve ; to be very sober in their Coverfations, but false and cruel in their Dealings ; to talk Scripture much, but to be proud and uncharitable in their Applications of it. In short, for what there was of it, their Religion

Mat. 23.
14.
Mat. 7. 12.
Mat. 23.
23.

K

was

was *sincere* enough ; and it was not of direct intent , but by accident only, that their Piety and Temperance proved such a cloak for their Knavery and Oppression. But in regard mens Credulity was as much abused by their Sanctified Behaviour, as if they had designed it on purpose to *draw them in* ; and Religion was no less scandalized by it ; therefore does our Saviour interpret all they did, of downright Hypocrisy.

4. I confess we read of one sort of *Pharisees*, that were called *Sichemite Pharisees* , because they were supposed to take that *Profession* upon themselves for worldly advantage ; as *Sichem* Circumcised himself for the sake of *Dinah* : But then these were but one Sect among seven of them, that *Drosus* reckons up ; and these of so small esteem among their own Party, as well as among the People, compared

red with the rest, that they cannot reasonably be supposed to include the main *Body* of the *Pharisees*, whom our Saviour calls Hypocrites without distinction. Besides that supposing these to be gross Hypocrites, this strongly implies the other Sects not to have been so; the Exception confirming the Rule: Nor could our Saviour therefore in justice fix this Character of Hypocrites upon the *Pharisees*, on account of *these alone*, whilst there were so many Sects among them that deserved it not; no more than a *Jew* or *Turk*, suppose, can with just reason charge *Christians* as being generally *Atheists*, tho there are many of them in the world, whose words and actions give too great occasion for such a Scandal: And still there is nothing that has been said about the *Pharisees* in general, but is as applicable to *these*, as any others: For the Worldly Advantage was the great thing they mind-

ed, and so their Religion *seemed* but a Pretence; yet no question but they might satisfy their Consciences in this with most Hypocrites now-a days, That whatever others might think of them, God's Glory *indeed* was the main thing they aimed at in their Practice of Religion; and if they throve and prospered by this, if men admired them for their Religious Strictnesses, and Worldly Profit flowed in by such means, this was none of their fault, they might say; rather it was the peculiar Blessing of God to them, for their Love and Fear of his Name.

5. And we have less reason to wonder, that the *Pharisees* could satisfy their Consciences in the Practice of such gross sins as our Saviour charges them with, when we consider that odd Maxim, that is reported to have been generally received by the *Jewish Doctors*, viz.
That

That it is necessary for every man to bestow his Diligence more especially about some one Precept of the Law ; and that if he be faithful and successful in this, it is enough to atone for his Transgressions of all other Duties : For by this the *Pharisees* had liberty to chuse or let alone what Commandments they thought fit : And they might well think it a notable pitch of Perfection to be careful in observing the *better half* of their Law, (as they did) when the keeping *one single* Precept was so Meritorious before God. Now the *Pharisees* darling sins were Covetousness and Pride ; and to secure themselves in the quiet possession of these, there were no Duties they could better spare, in way of *Composition* with God, than Piety and Temperance. Piety (such as theirs was) serving them with many opportunies for gratifying their Pride ; and Temperance being a *frugal* Virtue, which *regu-*

lated Expenses, for obliging their Covetousness: And therefore, lest an ordinary practice of such Duties might not make the *Merit* of them sufficient, they were willing to raise the Value of them by extraordinary Strictnesses: They *prayed long* therefore, and fasted often, and made a mighty bustle *in washing pans and cups*, and *ricing Mint and Cummin*, to make their Piety more compleat; and so over-scrupulous were they (we have heard) in their Rules of Temperance, that they could fasten the Names of Wine-bibber and Glutton even upon our Saviour. To which Duties they added a severe abstinence from Lascivious Acts, as things of so scandalous a nature, they knew, that one trip in these was enough to ruin their Reputation, by which their Pride and Covetousness were maintained. Nor do I think it a contemptible Argument of the *Pharisees* Sincerity in these Duties, that

Mat 9 14.

Mark 7. 4.

Luk. 11.

42.

that our Saviour no where condemns them for any secret failings in them: For Hypocrites, who design only a *shew* of Religion, value not what sins they commit in *private*: But our Saviour, who knew the *Pharisees* hearts much better than they themselves did, does in a great measure acquit them of this, by objecting no such thing against them. The only considerable place unmentioned that I know, relating to *this*, is Mat. 23
 that *Saying* of his, That the *Phari* 3, 4
sees said, and did not; and that they bound heavy burdens upon mens shoulders, which they themselves would not touch with one of their fingers: But this plainly refers, not to their inward thoughts, but their outward acts; as is evident from our Saviour's commanding his Disciples there, not to do after their works; and so is no proof of such Hypocrisy being in them, as I have been speaking of: And indeed all of this nature that can be concluded direct-

ly from this place, is only, That the *Pharisees sitting in Moses's seat*, and so being Doctors of the Law, pressed many Duties of Religion upon the *People*, which they themselves practised not: But sure, however reprobable the Ministers or Governors of any Church are, for not observing those Duties they teach; yet ought they not to be looked upon always as Hypocrites for this; many not having Grace to practise those things they teach, though they may believe them sincerely enough to be right; and especially such as these being obliged by virtue of their Office to inculcate the Duties of Religion upon others, whatever their own failings may be. And therefore, though our Saviour condemns the *Pharisees* in this place, for *laying heavy burdens upon mens shoulders, which themselves would not touch*; this argues not the Hypocrisy, but the vanity and unreasonableness of their

their Doctrines, in straining the Duties of Religion to impracticable heights, and condemning others uncharitably for every lesser slip, when themselves were daily guilty of much greater Crimes.

6. Wherefore, in fine, a man may be a Hypocrite, I think, tho he knows it not himself; and it is not only to *design* contrary to his Professions of Holiness, but to *do* contrary to them, that ranks him among such persons: And this I take to be the nature of the *Pharisees* Hypocrisy: The *Pharisees* were such persons as wise *Agur* speaks of, Prov. 30. who were *pure in their own eyes*, 17. and yet were not washed from their filthiness: Men that appeared not only to others, but to themselves, very Righteous persons: And they had no small reason to think *thus* of themselves, had Piety and Temperance, and the like Duties, been the only things required of us by God: But their great fault was, that

Mat. 23.
23.

that resting altogether in Performances of this nature, they became careless of other Duties no less necessary to Salvation; such more especially are those that are called *Social Vertues*: For they neglected those *weighty matters of the Law* (our Saviour says) *Judgment, Mercy, and Faith*; where by Judgment, he means Justice; by Mercy, Charity; by Faith, Faithfulness in dealing; by all of these, the whole of our Duty towards our Neighbour: These the *Pharisees* made little account of, as Duties of an inferior rank, which even Heathens and Sinners (for so their Spiritual Pride prompted them to call every one almost that was not of their own Sect) practised. But whatever the *Pharisees* might think of such Duties, our Saviour looks upon them as no other than the one half of Religion; and this of such esteem in his sight, that the most specious Holiness

Mat. 23.
36.

ness was but as a piece of *Pagentry* and *mock shew* with him, when such *substantial* Duties were neglected. It is by these therefore, that he has taught us to know Hypocrites, as *by their fruits*; and by the same marks he himself judges of the *Pharisees*; because these fruits of Righteousness appeared not in their lives; but how fair or promising soever the Tree might seem, they were either wholly barren in Good Works, or else produced Fruits quite contrary to expectation, Fruits that were noxious and fatal to such who conversed with them; therefore does our Saviour pronounce them to be Hypocrites; therefore does he declare that they shall *receive the greater damnation*. And this Notion of the *Pharisees* Hypocrisy, as I take it to be most just and true in it self, so does it best agree with that common Notion we have of a *Pharisaical Righteousness*; whereby we don't mean

Mat. 7. 16.

Mat. 23.

14.

mean a *Counterfeit* one, but a vain and empty one, that consists in *forms of godliness, denying the power thereof*; which ought to shew it self in Good Works.

7. Nor ought this to be reckoned a vain Subject of Discourse now-a-days; for though the *Pharisees* have long since been dead and rotten in their Graves, yet are their Principles and Practices still stirring among us; and there are many, it's to be feared, to whom the Name of a *Pharisee* is sufficiently odious, who yet, by mistaking the Nature of the *Pharisees* Hypocrisy, reckon it a great Perfection in Religion to imitate them in their most *distinguishing* Qualities: For we live in an Age wherein the greatest Pretenders to Religion are so taken up with *shews* of Holiness, that they mind little else; and this with no less Satisfaction to themselves, than Applause and Admiration

tion from the people. Inſomuch,
 that if *Chriſt* were to appear again
 upon earth with thoſe innocent
 freedoms he allowed himſelf in
 here, and a ſtrict *Phariſee* at the
 ſame time, with *long prayers*, and a
face diſfigured, and eye-lids conti-
 nually liſt up, and a brow knit at
 every little liberty men took, (tho
 without offence to God), it is little
 to be queſtioned, if ſome were to
 be the Judges, which would be
 reckoned the greater *Saint* of the
 two. Our Saviour's Modesty and
 Good Works would in all likeli-
 hood weigh as little among ſuch,
 for turning the ſcale on his ſide, as
 the *Phariſees* Pride and Injuſtice
 would hinder it from turning the
 other way. Such ſins as theſe being
 reckoned at worſt but ſpecks in
 God's Children, which God will
 not be extreme to mark; and ſuch
 therefore as ſhall make a better
 ſhow among ſome people, when
 gilded over by a ſpecious Holineſs,
 than

than the Virtues of other men, whose Conversations are not altogether so Formal. As long as such Principles and Practices as these are thus *taking* in the world, it cannot certainly be unreasonable to shew the dangerousness of them; which I think sufficiently appears in this Case of the *Pharisees*; for it was these chiefly, we see, that occasioned those many *Woes* which our Saviour pronounces against them. They contented themselves with a half-face Religion, which looked fair towards God, but was full of Pride and the like Deformities on the other side, carrying Guile and Oppression in it towards their Neighbour. And our Saviour is so far from approving this, that he looks upon them as no other than Hypocrites for it. So odious in his esteem were these Vices of theirs, which many make so light of, that not their Fasts and Prayers, not their Attendance upon Ordinances, not
all

all their Zeal and Strictnesses in other parts of Religion, could commend them to one good word from him, when attended with such Moral Defects as these. Certainly a plain Argument of the Excellency of Moral Precepts; and such as might be sufficient to make those ashamed who upbraid our Church with insisting upon such Precepts, and pretend to make distinctions betwixt Preaching Christ and these: As if to Preach Christ, were any thing else than to Preach those Duties which Christ has commanded; and as if there were any Duties that are urged upon mens Practice by Christ, under more pressing Circumstances than these. The God forbid here, that I should be thought any ways to vilifie the Duties of *real* Piety, so as to prefer Moral Duties before them, much less to reckon them of small weight in themselves: For when all is done, To Love the Lord our God
with

Mat. 22. 38. *With all our heart and all our souls, is the first and great commandment.*

And this is that, under Christ, which sanctifies every Moral work we do ; These being altogether vain and fruitless in the way to Salvation, when not acted with a design of pleasing God, and setting forth his Glory thereby : But what I have said, is only to shew, That to Love our Neighbour as our selves, is that *second commandment which is like unto the first* ; and that without doing this Will of our Heavenly Father, there is no entering into the Kingdom of God : For as our Saviour tells the *Pharisees* in a somewhat parallel case, Tho the former ought to be done, this latter ought by no means to be left undone ; and there is no less danger in omitting one than the other.

F T N E S.

